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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 3rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 3 October 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:	Mr. Acharya	(Nepal)
later:	Ms. Bolaños-Pérez (Vice-Chairman)	(Guatemala)
later:	Mr. Acharya	(Nepal)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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06-55194 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 35: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (A/61/23, chaps. VII and XII, and A/61/70)

Agenda item 36: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/61/23, chaps. V and XII)

Agenda item 37: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/61/23, chaps. VI and XII, and A/61/62)

Agenda item 38: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/61/66)

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/61/23 and A/61/121)

1. **Ms. Alam** (United Kingdom), noting that the United Kingdom was the administering Power for 10 of the Territories on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, said that the basis of her Government's policy towards its Overseas Territories was that the citizens of each one must determine whether they wished to stay linked to the United Kingdom. Successive Governments had given every encouragement to those Territories which wished to proceed to independence as an option. The consultation process between the United Kingdom and its Territories continued through annual meetings of the Overseas Territories Consultative Council, a forum for dialogue between democratically elected chief ministers from the Territories and British Government ministers. The agenda for the November 2006 meeting in London would cover a range of issues, including the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Territories, constitutional modernization, good governance and aspects of the United Kingdom's international obligations.

2. The Overseas Territories had been invited to review and propose ways of modernizing their Constitutions, and such discussions were under way with representatives of Montserrat, the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands. A new Turks and Caicos Islands Constitution had come into force in August, the successful conclusion of a four-year review process. The negotiations on the new constitution for Gibraltar had now been completed and the agreed text would soon be put to the people of Gibraltar in a referendum.

3. In supporting its Overseas Territories, her Government focused on increasing local capacity and promoting sustainable development. Its funding contributed to improving governance and promoting political and economic transparency; ensuring security; reducing vulnerability to natural and non-natural disasters; encouraging more diversified economic development; and supporting environmental management. Her Government also encouraged the Territories to strengthen relations with the European Commission in order to improve access to trade and to European economic and developmental aid.

4. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) said that his delegation supported the recommendations made by the Special Committee on decolonization in its report (A/61/23). It was the responsibility of all administering Powers to create conditions in the Territories under their control that enabled their people freely to exercise the right to self-determination. All administering Powers were also urged to work with the Special Committee.

5. The specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations, which had unfortunately been remiss for the most part, must increase their assistance to the Territories. The United Nations system must also work towards the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization, with particular emphasis on self-determination as an available option. The Special Committee seminars and the United Nations visiting missions to the Territories should continue.

6. Decolonization, a major United Nations achievement, was far from complete, and progress at the midpoint of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was particularly discouraging. Implementation of the decolonization mandate was the key, and required a coordinated response from the United Nations system and the administering Powers, as urged in the Special Committee's Plan of Implementation (A/60/853). The engagement of New Zealand in Tokelau's process of

self-determination had been exemplary, and should serve as a guide for other administering Powers and Territories.

7. There was no alternative to the fundamental human right of self-determination. In Western Sahara, where that right faced a complex challenge, Pakistan urged the brother nations involved in the dispute to agree to a mutually acceptable, negotiated and peaceful settlement that provided for self-determination by the people in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Other situations around the globe, not limited to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, involved colonialism, illegal occupation and alien subjugation of peoples. In the Middle East, for example, the Palestinian people were being denied their right to determine their own fate, although the freedom and prosperity of the countries of the region and beyond depended on a just and lasting solution of that issue. Also, the legitimate right of self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir had been recognized in several Security Council resolutions and a settlement of the dispute there was central to the establishment of durable peace in south Asia. A solution acceptable to Pakistan, India and, above all, the people of Jammu and Kashmir was essential, and was a subject of his Government's ongoing dialogue with India.

8. **Mr. Kumaran** (India) said that, even in the new century, the Organization continued to grapple with the vestiges of colonialism, a bygone system that ran counter to its fundamental principles. Sixteen areas still remained on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The United Nations approach to the task ahead must blend urgency and activism with sensitivity and circumspection, taking into account — on a case-by-case basis — the needs of the people of the Territories, their special circumstances, their political aspirations and their stage of development. It was crucial to inform those people of the legitimate political options available to them, namely, independence or free association or integration with a State. Two important tools for remedying a lack of information in the course of decolonization were the visits of United Nations missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories, which needed the full cooperation of administering Powers, and the holding of regional seminars by the Special Committee; and it might be useful to combine both as a way of obtaining first-hand information on local conditions and ascertaining the wishes of the people involved.

9. The role of the administering Powers was an important one, and each should work in a positive spirit with the Special Committee to tailor specific action plans for the Territories for which it was responsible. The referendum held in Tokelau was one such example of partnership. The Chairman of the Special Committee had rightly stated that the focus should now be on producing a plan of implementation for the wider United Nations system, so as to complete decolonization by 2010. As a founding member of the United Nations and of the Special Committee, India stood in solidarity with other erstwhile colonized peoples and nations.

10. **Mr. Yousfi** (Algeria) observed that in the current year, the people of Tokelau had in a historic referendum been given the opportunity to exercise their right to determine their own future status. Another people whose Territory — Western Sahara — was the last to be decolonized in Africa was still waiting to be able to exercise that same right, having seen its decolonization process brutally interrupted in 1975 when it was invaded, occupied and dismembered by its neighbour to the north. Since then, Morocco had resorted to unilateral acts, unkept promises and foot-dragging in order to head off a genuine referendum, in an attempt to establish a de facto situation that would give it unrecognized sovereignty over a Territory it occupied by force. Morocco had unilaterally and arbitrarily rejected the 1990 Settlement Plan, the 1997 Houston Accords and the 2003 Peace Plan, all concluded under the auspices of the United Nations and unanimously approved by the Security Council, and had proposed instead a spurious internal autonomy plan. It was, furthermore, terrorizing the Saharan population to discourage them from putting forward their legitimate claims, all the while maintaining a blackout on information and denying outside access to the Territory.

11. Algeria shared common borders and a common destiny with the parties to the conflict and remained convinced that the only just and lasting solution was the holding of a free referendum according to United Nations standards, that would include the option of independence. Algeria thus continued to endorse the Peace Plan as the best political settlement to the conflict. The international community and especially the Security Council must reject any approach that would be a departure from international legitimacy or

would deny the Saharan people their inalienable right to self-determination.

12. **Mr. Liu** Zhenmin (China) observed that there were still 2 million people living in 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories, despite the declaration of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly and the reiteration in the 2005 World Summit Outcome of the need to respect the right to self-determination of people which remained under colonial domination and foreign occupation. Member States all aspired to bring the decolonization process to an early conclusion, and therefore had a duty to take an active interest in helping dependent peoples to exercise that right. The Committee shouldered a major responsibility in that regard and had made vigorous efforts, strengthening its links with the Territories by various means and encouraging closer cooperation with the administering Powers. China had always supported the rights of the people of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

13. *Ms. Bolaños-Pérez (Guatemala), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

14. **Mr. Panggabean** (Indonesia) said that decolonization had become increasingly complex and required new and innovative solutions. While his delegation shared the view that each decolonization scenario had special characteristics, the decolonization of the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories was proceeding very slowly. Specific tasks requested by the General Assembly in connection with the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had not been fully carried out, and analysis of the Territories had shown that there was an information deficit. Accordingly, the peoples of the Territories must be made fully aware of all the options available. There should be further cooperation among the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system and between those bodies and the Committee with a view to enhancing the provision of assistance to the Territories, especially in the areas of education and manpower development.

15. Noting that Tokelau was the exception to the slow process of decolonization, he hailed the referendum held in February 2006 as an important step in the process and looked forward to the second referendum to be held in November 2007. Indonesia welcomed the willingness of the Government of Fiji to host the Pacific Regional Seminar in November 2006 and underlined the importance of the seminars as a forum for a productive exchange of views on the challenges being faced by the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the role that the United Nations might play in the development process. The international community should bring the decolonization process to a successful conclusion and commit to making the twenty-first century free from colonialism.

16. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia) said that self-determination was a fundamental human right enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It was surprising and unfortunate to have 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, prompting the General Assembly to declare a Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. He called on the administering Powers to speed up the process of self-determination in the remaining Territories.

17. Namibia had noted with concern that the administering Powers had not provided the United Nations with information on the economic, social and educational conditions in the Territories, as required by Article 73 *e* of the Charter and therefore supported the call by the Secretary-General to discuss the matter in the Special Committee.

18. His delegation was deeply concerned over current developments with regard to the question of Western Sahara. The inalienable right to self-determination of the Saharan people was not negotiable, as agreed by the African Union and the United Nations. Any attempt to assert otherwise was a clear violation of the rights of the Saharan people. Namibia encouraged the strengthening of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to enable it to continue monitoring the ceasefire agreement and human rights violations in Western Sahara. He called for the urgent implementation of all Security Council and General Assembly resolutions to enable the people of Western Sahara to hold a free and fair referendum to determine their own future.

19. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the question of Western Sahara (A/61/121). Despite the political deadlock, there had been some positive developments, including the nomination of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara; the designation of a new Special Representative for Western Sahara and head of

MINURSO; the active cooperation of the parties with MINURSO in marking and detonating unexploded mines and ammunition; the release of the Moroccan prisoners of war by Frente POLISARIO; the considerable progress made in the restructuring of MINURSO; and the broad recognition of the international community of the need to arrive at a lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara.

20. The search for a lasting solution must take place in a calm and stable environment. That would hinge on agreement between Morocco and Algeria, two countries united by geography, history, culture and the common goal of building the Arab Maghreb Union, one of the pillars of the African Union. Warning against any attempt to prolong the deadlock, he said that maintaining the status quo was not an option. The international community must help to break the deadlock, which could cause instability in the region and threaten international peace and security.

21. The Secretary-General's Personal Envoy should help to find a dynamic political compromise taking into account international law and the political situation of the region. In that connection, he looked forward to the recommendations of the Personal Envoy following his upcoming visit in order to assess the situation with the relevant parties and neighbouring States. Those recommendations should allow the Security Council to take appropriate and constructive decisions on the question of Western Sahara, with achievable goals. He welcomed Morocco's full willingness to engage in a sincere dialogue in an effort to achieve a definitive and realistic solution to the question. He welcomed the reactivation of the Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS), which invited Saharan leaders to join the discussions on a draft plan for the autonomy of Western Sahara to be submitted in the near future to the United Nations.

22. The human dimension of the conflict could not be ignored. His delegation welcomed the resumption of the programme of exchange of family visits and encouraged MINURSO to support other confidence-building measures. He reaffirmed his delegation's firm position on the need to maintain the territorial integrity of Morocco and called on all parties to resume their talks in an effort to arrive at a just and lasting solution. The international community should hold a debate aimed at finding an innovative and practical solution to the long-standing conflict.

23. **Mr. Abolhassani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the United Nations should endeavour to maintain the issue of decolonization as one of the priority items on its agenda as long as people were still living in Non-Self-Governing Territories. To make the process more effective, the Committee needed an official and respectful relationship with the administering Powers. The Islamic Republic of Iran supported, along with other Member States, the efforts and initiatives of the Committee aimed at the eradication of colonialism.

24. Raising awareness of people living under colonial rule about their right to self-determination was critical. Any decision taken regarding the status of Non-Self-Governing Territories, such as de-listing, should be transparent, comply with the true process of decolonization and ensure that the people were able to take informed decisions about their future. It was the obligation of the administering Powers to meet the informational needs of the Territories. The flow of information would enable the people to know which stage of the decolonization process they had reached, and what they should do to reach their final goals. It would also maintain the Special Committee abreast of the economic, political, social and educational conditions of the Territories and enable it to make meaningful progress in the decolonization process. His delegation recognized the effective role of the Department of Public Information and the Department of Political Affairs and encouraged them to enhance their efforts. Visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories also provided an effective means to assess the conditions and aspirations of the people living there. The Special Committee should continue to seek the formal and timely cooperation of the administering Powers in holding regional seminars, submitting information in a timely fashion under Article 73 *e* and dispatching visiting missions.

25. It was the obligation of the administering Powers to promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories, and to safeguard their natural resources and cultural heritage. In that connection, any activity by the administering Powers aimed at the exploitation of marine, natural and human resources should take into account the interests of the people, including the indigenous populations. Any activity that might adversely affect the interests of the people should be expressly avoided by the administering Powers. The administering Powers must take all

necessary steps to protect the property rights of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The military installations and activities of some administering Powers in Non-Self-Governing Territories were a source of serious concern. The interests of the people must be duly taken into account and their views fully respected by the administering Powers.

26. *Mr. Acharya (Nepal) resumed the Chair.*

27. **Mr. Outlule** (Botswana) said that it was entirely feasible for the people of Western Sahara to achieve a just, peaceful and durable political settlement and he encouraged them to persist in demanding their inalienable right to determine their destiny. It was deeply regrettable that the matter was still on the agenda of the United Nations. The legal position, as set out by the International Court of Justice in 1975, was clear: there was no tie of territorial sovereignty between the territory of Western Sahara and the Kingdom of Morocco or Mauritania. Resolution AHG/Res. 104 (XIX), adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity in 1983, referred to Morocco's commitment to accept the holding of a referendum on self-determination in Western Sahara. The African Union expected that commitment to be honoured.

28. The issue had been taken up in General Assembly resolution 40/50, which made it clear that the question of Western Sahara was not a bilateral matter but the responsibility of the United Nations as a whole. The process had been carried a stage further by the adoption of Security Council resolution 621 (1988), which authorized the Secretary-General to appoint a special representative for the region and requested him to report on the holding of a referendum for self-determination. Many resolutions had been adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council calling for the implementation of the Settlement Plan so that the people of Western Sahara could choose between independence and integration with Morocco. Failure to implement the Plan would be a betrayal not only of the people of Western Sahara but also the principles on which the United Nations was founded. Moreover, the United Nations should recognize the implications of failure or refusal by a Member State to implement its decisions. Meanwhile, the principled position of the African Union remained unchanged.

29. The right of the people of Western Sahara to choose between independence and integration with Morocco posed no threat to any one. It could not be ascertained in advance how they would vote, but his delegation had faith in the democratic process and would accept the result of a free, fair and impartial referendum, which should include the option of integration with Morocco, as the will of the people of Western Sahara.

30. **Mr. Rokolaqa** (Fiji) said that the midterm review of the Plan of Action of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism had shown that it was crucial for the United Nations to redouble its efforts to accelerate the decolonization efforts in the remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories. Self-determination could not materialize overnight. It was a long and gradual process that should involve discussions between the administering Powers and the people of the Territories. The decolonization process should include the political, economic and social empowerment of the inhabitants of the Territories, in order to help them realize their political destiny. It was therefore important to create conditions of stability, well-being and respect for the principle of equal rights. The offers of scholarships by Member States were to be commended.

31. Visiting missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories acted as a catalyst of decolonization, in that they made it possible to assess the type of assistance that the United Nations system could provide for the process of self-determination. In that connection, his delegation commended the efforts of New Zealand in facilitating the referendum held in Tokelau at the beginning of 2006 and acknowledged the assistance and support offered by France to the people of New Caledonia. It was, however, important that local people should be involved in governmental and social structures.

32. In the conviction that regional seminars provided colonial peoples with the opportunity to voice their concerns and aspirations, Fiji had agreed to host the Pacific Regional Seminar in Nadi from 28 to 30 November 2006. The seminar would review the progress achieved in implementing the Plan of Action of the International Decade. It would also assess the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, particularly their evolution towards self-government.

33. With regard to the question of Western Sahara, there was an urgent need to revive the dialogue between the parties concerned in order to prevent further deterioration in the human rights situation. His delegation continued to support the Peace Plan for the Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara. The situation would remain unresolved until the parties cooperated and the free choice of its people was acknowledged. His delegation commended the United Nations agencies for their work in providing humanitarian assistance to refugee camps and in coordinating the exchange of family visits between refugees from Western Sahara living in Algeria and their relatives in the territory. It supported the extension of the mandate of MINURSO until 31 October 2006.

34. **Mr. Arias Cárdenas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, as a country that had suffered greatly from colonial exploitation, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela attached great importance to the Committee's work. The country owed its freedom to the sacrifice of all its peoples and the historic example of its Liberator, Simon Bolivar, whose ideology was incorporated in the 1999 Constitution. The change in the country's name signified a real change in the concept of the State and its international relations. In that connection, it was noteworthy that the Venezuelan army had left its borders only to help its neighbours in the struggle against the colonial Power of the time.

35. The Constitution stated that the aim of the State was to establish a democratic, participatory, proactive, multi-ethnic and multicultural society. The country's approach to foreign relations meanwhile was to respect the principles of independence, equality, self-determination and non-intervention. On international solidarity, the Constitution introduced two new ideas: to help peoples in their struggle for their emancipation and to promote the practice of democracy in international bodies. In accordance with those principles, the Government supported countries still under foreign domination and engaged fully in regional and international cooperation.

36. States should respect the right of all peoples to self-determination, without external interference, and observe the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, including those relating to territorial integrity. That point was also made by General Assembly resolution 59/136, particularly paragraphs 11 and 15. His delegation therefore reiterated its position that the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands formed an inalienable part of the territory of Argentina, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), paragraph 6. In such a case, the principle of self-determination did not apply, since the populations of the islands in question had been installed by the occupying Power.

37. One Latin American nation, Puerto Rico, had still not exercised its right to self-determination and independence. His delegation reaffirmed its view that the country should achieve its independence and called for the implementation of a mechanism to ensure the full participation of all Puerto Ricans in resolving its political status.

38. **Mr. Gregoire** (Dominica), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that, unfortunately, insufficient attention and resources had been devoted to implementing Article 73 *b* of the Charter of the United Nations and a range of General Assembly resolutions that laid down systematic procedures for Non-Self-Governing Territories to achieve a full measure of self-government. The result was that the business of decolonization was unfinished. The member States of CARICOM had therefore extended to the remaining seven Non-Self-Governing Territories in the region official status in the Community. Provision had been made for their participation in a variety of CARICOM institutions, including the Caribbean Development Bank, the University of the West Indies and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency. Several were also members or associate members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and some belonged to the Eastern Caribbean Currency Authority or the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank.

39. Interaction with the international community served to prepare small island territories to assume full self-government. CARICOM therefore favoured the participation of the Caribbean Territories in programmes of the Economic and Social Council. The level of political and constitutional progress, however, remained insufficient in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. CARICOM reiterated its commitment to the principles of self-determination and decolonization. It also endorsed various resolutions by the Committee in identifying how the process could be completed.

40. Two recommendations already adopted by the General Assembly were critical. The first had been

that, under the Plan of Action of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, analytical studies on the prevailing political conditions should be carried out. Admittedly, annual reports by the Secretariat on each Territory provided useful statistical and other information, but more in-depth political analysis was required. Only one Non-Self-Governing Territory had achieved full self-government under the present procedure over the past 15 years, so innovations were clearly required. In that connection, it was encouraging that the Committee was to consider the appointment of an eminent Caribbean scholar and an independent expert, with no financial implications to the Committee, to undertake such essential analyses and report to Member States.

41. The second recommendation had been that a work programme should be prepared for each small island territory, on a case-by-case basis. His delegation called for the relevant administering Powers to work with the Committee on such programmes.

42. CARICOM fully endorsed the Plan of Implementation of the Decolonization Mandate 2006-2007 contained in document A/60/853, which identified action to be taken by the relevant United Nations bodies, administering Powers and experts. The Secretary-General should give consideration to the recommendations made, given that the International Decade was fast coming to an end.

43. CARICOM also reaffirmed its support for the achievement of self-determination for the people of Western Sahara, reiterated its calls for full implementation of the Peace Plan and expressed concern for the continued political deadlock which could cause increased instability in the region.

44. The continuation of colonialism in any form in the twenty-first century was an anachronism. While the internal constitutional modernization undertaken by administering Powers in some Non-Self-Governing Territories was welcome, such colonial reforms did not address the fundamental need for true self-determination and, ultimately, decolonization. CARICOM was concerned that one administering Power no longer offered the status of free association to the territories it administered in the Caribbean.

45. **Mr. Okio** (Congo) recalled that Member States had pledged their commitment to the decolonization process in the Declaration on decolonization, the Millennium Declaration, the World Summit Declaration and General Assembly resolution 60/119 of 8 December 2005. The United Nations had made significant progress towards eradicating colonialism. However, it was undeniable that considerable work remained to be done; 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories still aspired to the goal of self-determination. In particular, efforts should be redoubled to intensify the dissemination of information and to provide training to the people of those Non-Self-Governing Territories. The United Nations Special Missions to Bermuda and the Turks and Caicos Islands had revealed that there was lack of information on self-determination within the Territories themselves. Visiting missions were not only a tool for assessing the local socio-political situation; they were an effective means of informing people about their rights.

46. Noting that there could be no further progress without the full cooperation of the administering Powers, he called for increased cooperation between the Special Committee and the administering Powers. Furthermore, it was essential for resolutions to be adopted following a genuine consensus among Member States. The Chairman of the Special Committee had prepared a Plan of Implementation of the Decolonization Mandate 2006-2007 contained in document A/60/853, which identified a need for new and innovative measures to enable the United Nations to carry out its mandate of assisting Non-Self-Governing Territories to achieve self-determination. The plan recommended the appointment of an independent expert who would assist the Special Committee in analysing the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and monitoring the implementation of resolutions. His delegation called for further consideration of that recommendation.

47. **Mr. Kumalo** (South Africa) said that the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic was a member of the African Union whose independence had been recognized by many African countries. At the same time, Morocco was also a friendly African country. He hoped that those two African nations would find a way to resolve their differences, differences that remained a challenge for the continent. Indeed, his delegation was concerned over the fact that the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic was still listed as a Non-Self-Governing Territory by the United Nations. The Peace Plan for the Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara, which had been prepared by the former Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General,

Mr. James Baker III, had provided a fair way of seeking a solution that would enable the Saharan people to exercise their right to self-determination. Although the Security Council had reaffirmed its support for that Plan, Morocco had yet to accept it unconditionally. Indeed, the Secretary-General had stated that a new plan would probably be rejected by Morocco unless it excluded the provision for a referendum with independence as an option, yet the United Nations could not endorse a plan that excluded a genuine referendum. It was clear that the impasse between Morocco and the Saharan people would remain unresolved until the Saharan people were able to exercise their right of self-determination in the form of a referendum endorsed in the Peace Plan.

48. His delegation was concerned over Morocco's non-compliance with the resolutions and decisions of the United Nations. General Assembly resolution 60/114 on Western Sahara had yet to be implemented. His delegation welcomed the fact that POLISARIO had continued to maintain its support for the Peace Plan and had released the remaining Moroccan prisoners of war. On 25 March 2006, the King of Morocco had pardoned 216 prisoners, including 30 Saharan activists. It was regrettable that the Moroccan forces had intervened to disperse the people who had gathered to celebrate the release of those activists. His delegation called on the Government of Morocco and POLISARIO to redouble their efforts to find a way out of the impasse, commended the role of MINURSO in enforcing the ceasefire agreement and urged all parties to cooperate with MINURSO. He hoped that the United Nations would not endorse any plan that excluded a free and fair referendum and denied the Saharan people their fundamental right to opt for self-determination.

49. **Mr. Onanga M. Ndiaye** (Gabon) said that his delegation was firmly committed to the principle of multilateralism in international relations and acknowledged the central role of the United Nations, which had made a significant contribution to decolonization in Africa. However, it was important to ensure that the resolutions on decolonization were implemented, which was why his delegation supported the annual review of the implementation of such resolutions. Following the midterm review of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, it was necessary to step up efforts in the areas of information and training in order to promote social and economic growth in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation was concerned by the fact that the resolution on Western Sahara had not been fully implemented in spite of the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy. It was convinced that progress could only be made with the cooperation of all parties involved and the support of the international community and expressed the hope that those parties would make every effort to find a peaceful solution in the Maghreb region.

50. **Ms. Katabarwa** (Uganda) said it was lamentable that in the twenty-first century there were still peoples and Territories that did not have the same rights as full Members of the United Nations and her delegation called for the fulfilment of their right to self-determination. Her delegation supported the right of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic to self-determination in accordance with the various resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council and called on the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to continue their efforts to ensure that the question of Western Sahara was resolved in a timely manner. It was imperative that all parties involved should cooperate with the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to resolve that long-standing issue.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

51. **Ms. Alam** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the statement made by the representative of Venezuela regarding the issue of sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, said that the United Kingdom's position on the issue was well known and had been set out in detail by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations in a letter to the Secretary-General on 27 April 2006. The United Kingdom had no doubts about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. There could be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands unless and until such time as the islanders so wished.

52. **Mr. Singh** (India), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the remarks made by the representative of Pakistan on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, said that, in pursuit of its foreign policy objectives, Pakistan was seeking to divide the ranks of those who supported the sovereignty of Lebanon and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. His delegation wished to reaffirm that India would not change its policy with

respect to Lebanon and the rights of the Palestinian people.

53. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said, with respect to the Indian representative's remarks on the self-determination of the people of Kashmir, that his delegation had merely stated facts when referring to the state of Kashmir and the question of the Middle East and Palestine. The representative of India had completely misconstrued his delegation's statement.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 4th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 4 October 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Acharya ..... (Nepal)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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06-55354 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Agenda item 35: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/61/23, chaps. VII and XII, and A/61/70)

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1. **Mr. Yañez-Barnuevo** (Spain) said that the question of Gibraltar was a priority in Spain's foreign policy. The ministerial meeting of the Trilateral Forum for Dialogue on Gibraltar, which had been held on 18 September 2005, and the forthcoming referendum on the new constitution of Gibraltar signalled a new era that would usher in a climate conducive to a solution to the dispute between Spain and the United Kingdom over Gibraltar. However, those developments did not change Spain's position on the colonial status of Gibraltar, nor imply a change in the doctrine of the United Nations with respect to the decolonization of the Territory. Spain did not renounce its sovereignty over Gibraltar, which had been ceded under article X of the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713, or over the isthmus Territory, whose occupation Spain had never recognized. In recent resolutions, the General Assembly had affirmed that colonization was contrary to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and that the question of Gibraltar affected the territorial unity of Spain. Decolonization should come about as the result of negotiations between Spain and the United Kingdom, taking into account the interests of Gibraltar and not the supposed right of self-government. In 1984, both Governments had launched the Brussels Process and had pledged to resolve the dispute in accordance with United Nations resolutions. The General Assembly had called on the United Kingdom and Spain to enter into negotiations in the framework of the Brussels Process, with a view to resolving their differences over Gibraltar, including the question of sovereignty. Spain was committed to that process.

2. The purpose of the forthcoming referendum on the new constitution of Gibraltar was unclear because the people of Gibraltar and the United Kingdom had repeatedly stated their belief in the United Kingdom's full sovereignty over Gibraltar. Indeed, the new constitution represented an internal development in the form of the modernization of the public administration and did not have any impact on Gibraltar's international status. The former Chairman of the Special Committee, Mr. Hunte, had stated that if the administering Powers retained powers under procedures such as the enactment of a new constitution, it would be difficult to accept that a process of decolonization had taken place. Furthermore, the final article of the new constitution of Gibraltar clearly reflected the Territory's colonial status by stating that Her Majesty the Queen had the full power to enact legislation in Gibraltar. Gibraltar remained on the list of overseas Territories of the United Kingdom, a colony that could not be removed from the list of 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories.

3. Turning to the Trilateral Forum for Dialogue on Gibraltar, he said that it had resulted in the conclusion of specific agreements on the use of the airport, the pensions of Spanish workers living in Gibraltar and the development of telecommunications and road infrastructures. Those agreements had been concluded without prejudice to the respective positions on sovereignty, including the Territory in which the airport was located. It had been acknowledged that the question of sovereignty was to be addressed in bilateral negotiations between Spain and the United Kingdom. It would be an error to claim that the forum divested the United Kingdom of its responsibility to negotiate with Spain on the question of decolonization. Dialogue and negotiation were the only means of finding a solution. His delegation hoped that the United Kingdom would show responsibility as an administering Power and

would acknowledge that there was no alternative to negotiations in the framework of the mandate of the United Nations. Spain maintained its claims to sovereignty and those claims were inseparably linked to the United Nations mandate for the decolonization of Gibraltar. There should be no attempt to decolonize Gibraltar that deviated from the international legal measures established by United Nations resolutions.

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other items*) (*continued*)

Hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and petitioners

Question of Gibraltar (A/C.4/61/2)

4. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Caruana, Chief Minister of Gibraltar, took a place at the petitioner's table.*

5. **Mr. Caruana** (Chief Minister of Gibraltar) said that there could be no doubt that Gibraltar was a normal case of decolonization in accordance with the inalienable right to self-determination of its people. Self-determination was the only principle applicable in the decolonization process under the Charter of the United Nations and international legal instruments, and it was an unsustainable misconception to seek to apply the principle of territorial integrity to any process of decolonization. Spain persisted with the view that the people of Gibraltar had no right to self-determination and that the decolonization of Gibraltar could only be brought about by the handover of Gibraltar's sovereignty from the United Kingdom to Spain, regardless of the wishes of the people. The essence of Spain's position was that the principle of territorial integrity had priority over, displaced and defeated the principle of self-determination. His delegation did not agree with that position and believed that there was no current political or legal justification for Spain's position.

6. It was important not to confuse issues relating to decolonization with issues relating to sovereignty disputes. Decolonization and sovereignty were different questions. There had been significant political and constitutional developments affecting Gibraltar which had affected the decolonization process and it was his delegation's view that decolonization should no longer concern the United Nations in the case of Gibraltar. Following negotiations with the United Kingdom, a new constitution had been drafted which maximized Gibraltar's self-government to the point beyond which there could only be a constitution for Gibraltar's total independence. The position of the United Kingdom was that Gibraltar did enjoy the right to self-determination but could not opt for full independence without Spain's consent by virtue of the Treaty of Utrecht. However, that situation did not curtail Gibraltar's right to self-determination. There was no basis in international law for such a curtailment and his delegation would be happy for Spain to refer that question to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion. The new constitution would be put to the people of Gibraltar in a referendum organized by the Government of Gibraltar. The United Kingdom had recognized that the referendum constituted an act of self-determination by the people of Gibraltar.

7. If the people of Gibraltar accepted the constitution, they would have, despite strongly disagreeing with the United Kingdom's view that, under the Treaty of Utrecht, the consent of Spain was required for total independence, opted for a constitutional status with the United Kingdom desired by a majority of the people of Gibraltar. The non-colonial relationship under the constitution would bring about the decolonization of Gibraltar, although sovereignty was formally vested in the United Kingdom and the dispute over Spain's sovereignty remained. The General Assembly would determine whether it was appropriate to cease the transmission of information on Gibraltar by the United Kingdom under Article 73 *e* of the Charter and to de-list Gibraltar. General Assembly requirements for full self-government, freedom from control or interference from the Government of another State and complete autonomy in respect of economic and social affairs, with absolute political equality in the form of independence, free association or integration, was based on only three valid forms of decolonization, and, therefore, incomplete. It had been decades since the United Kingdom had exercised unilateral authority to make laws and other regulations without the consent of the people of Gibraltar; therefore, Gibraltar was self-governing. The new constitution was not mere colonial reform and provided for a modern and mature relationship between the United Kingdom and Gibraltar. If the people of Gibraltar exercised the right to self-determination and accepted the constitution,

others should also accept it. If the General Assembly did not accept the new constitution as adequate for the de-listing of Gibraltar, then the current decolonization requirements were outdated and should be reviewed.

8. The Trilateral Forum for Dialogue worked on the basis of an open agenda in which all three parties participated equally and nothing was agreed without full consent. All three Governments had worked diligently to settle long-standing issues such as the enhanced use of the Gibraltar airport, telecommunications, border fluidity and pension rights of cross-border Spanish workers. He welcomed the political effort of the Government of Spain. The Forum demonstrated that Gibraltar and Spain could engage each other in dialogue without prejudice to the issues of sovereignty and self-determination. While the agreements did not relate to sovereignty, Spain was free to raise the issue if it so wished. The Trilateral Forum was separate from the bilateral United Kingdom-Spain Brussels Process. In practice, the Trilateral Forum had replaced the Brussels Process, which had not functioned since 2002. There was no prospect of sovereignty negotiations resuming under the Brussels Process because the United Kingdom would not enter into sovereignty negotiations with which Gibraltar was not content, and Gibraltar would never be content with the Brussels Process. The General Assembly consensus decision on Gibraltar should reflect that information.

9. *Mr. Caruana withdrew.*

10. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bossano (Leader of the Opposition, Parliament of Gibraltar) took a place at the petitioner's table.*

11. **Mr. Bossano** (Leader of the Opposition, Parliament of Gibraltar) said that he did not agree with the position of the United Kingdom that the decolonization of Gibraltar should not include the participation of the United Nations. However, faced with no other option, Gibraltar had arrived at a bilateral agreement with the United Kingdom, culminating in the new constitution. According to the guidelines of the Department of Public Information, an act of self-determination meant that the people of a colony decided their status. The United Kingdom had stated that a vote by the people of Gibraltar on the new constitution was an act of self-determination. That notwithstanding, the United Kingdom had also indicated that the sovereignty dispute with Spain was still negotiable under the Treaty of Utrecht. He did not agree with the United Kingdom. Nor did he agree with the Territorial Government that the Committee's decolonization criteria were outdated or unilaterally invented by the Special Committee. He recalled that de-listing was not the goal, but the result of the attainment of a full measure of self-government and welcomed the Committee's review of Gibraltar taking into account the same criteria as it would for any other Territory.

12. The United Kingdom's opinion that the relationship with Gibraltar under the new constitution was no longer colonial was untenable. Equally untenable was its assertion that it was not bound by General Assembly resolution 1541 because it had abstained from the vote in 1960, and its position with respect to Spain. At some point the United Kingdom would have to put forth a consistent stance and either defend the decolonization of Gibraltar or placate Spain with sovereignty negotiations.

13. In his view, the only principle applicable to decolonization was self-determination. If the new constitution fell short of the requirements for decolonization, it could and should be amended, with the participation of the United Kingdom, Gibraltar and the United Nations. The United Kingdom should inform the Committee about what it was doing to further the decolonization process and should seek to include the United Nations in the process. In that connection, it needed to inform Spain that it had no role to play in the decolonization of Gibraltar, as had been decided by the people of Gibraltar in two referendums separated by 35 years. Tripartite concessions were no substitute for decolonization. A substantial number of the people of Gibraltar remained steadfastly committed to full decolonization.

14. *Mr. Bossano withdrew.*

Question of Guam (A/C.4/61/3, A/C.4/61/3/Add.2, A/C.4/61/3/Add.3, A/C.4/61/3/Add.4, A/C.4/61/3/Add.5)

15. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Aguon (Chamoru Cultural Development and Research Institute) took a place at the petitioner's table.*

16. **Mr. Aguon** (Chamoru Cultural Development and Research Institute) said that he had informed the Committee the previous year about the revelations that United States federal agencies had deliberately quashed

a presidential directive by President Ford in 1975 mandating that Guam be given a status no less favourable than that of the commonwealth arrangements of the Northern Mariana Islands, and that there was a campaign under way to privatize Guam's public resources. Electricity had since been privatized, as had telecommunications. Plans were under way to privatize the water supply and the island's one and only commercial port.

17. Furthermore, the island was being prepared for a massive military build-up to begin in 2007. Realignment plans included the influx of 55,000 military personnel, including 8,000 U.S. Marines and their 9,000 dependents who were being ousted from Okinawa. There was concern that the women of Guam would suffer the same fate as those who were raped in Okinawa. Approximately 20,000 workers on construction contracts were expected to join the military personnel. The military planned to increase the number of nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers and establish a strike and intelligence surveillance reconnaissance hub on Guam, where it already occupied one third of the land. The United States was intending to occupy more land, while it had not done anything to clean up contamination from its Second World War activities. This would have devastating effects on the Chamorus of Guam, only 37 per cent of the island's inhabitants, who were already suffering from high rates of radioactivity-related cancer and other maladies common in colonies. Bills seeking compensation for exposure of Chamorus to radioactive material and imprisonment in Japanese concentration camps during the Second World War were languishing in the United States Congress.

18. The United States had allocated billions of dollars for military base installations and the education of the children of military personnel. No allocation had been made to shore up the crumbling infrastructures or the public education system of Guam, yet funds were so sparse that teachers had not been paid for three months. The United States seemed to expect Guam to pay for the largest military exercise in recent history conducted in June 2006 off Guam, which resulted in no access to water for the villages along the Navy waterline. The United States Government would not compensate Guam for bearing the costs of free association with Micronesian states, which strained the Territory's limited resources.

19. The people of Guam were not unified around the military buildup. There was no free press. The Pacific Daily News was a United States subsidiary newspaper and did not offer any criteria for the formulation of an informed opinion. The Chamoru people had not been asked for input and did not agree with the plans of the United States. He urged the Committee to pass a resolution explicitly condemning the massive military transfer and buildup as a breach of the duty of the administering Power.

20. *Mr. Aguon withdrew.*

21. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Naputi Borja (Organization of People for Indigenous Rights) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

22. **Ms. Naputi Borja** (Organization of People for Indigenous Rights), speaking on behalf of Ms. Alvarez Cristobal, observed that Guam, after 300 years of foreign domination by Spain, became in 1898 a colony of the United States, whose sole interest was to expand its military presence in the Pacific, with Guam as its most strategic outpost. The Chamoru people's land had been unilaterally confiscated for military purposes and thousands of military personnel had been stationed on the island. Moreover, as the administering Power, the United States had year after year abstained or voted against United Nations resolutions addressing the question of Guam.

23. The people of Guam, as United States citizen voters, had in their wisdom voted not to ratify two proposed Guam constitutions, one in 1972 and one in 1979, that would have recognized United States sovereignty. The entire political status process in Guam had developed without the active involvement or encouragement of the administering Power. In a 1987 plebiscite, the people had voted for an interim limited internal self-government status, but the resulting draft Guam Commonwealth Act had been rejected by the United States Congress because of its provisions on Chamoru self-determination and local control of immigration and other aspects of United States control.

24. The United States put its security interests above all other concerns, allowing political, social and economic developments in Guam only within the parameters it established. For instance, the participation of resident United States troops in a referendum on political status in a Non-Self-Governing Territory was illogical, unfair and an affront to the

people's democratic right to vote to determine their political destiny.

25. The government of Guam had begun the island's own decolonization process by enacting into law a system for registering the Chamoru people in preparation for a self-determination plebiscite and by establishing a Commission on Decolonization. Thus far, however, there had been little headway made against obstacles like the United States immigration policy that sought to reduce the proportion of indigenous inhabitants, or the United States-backed privatization of Chamoru assets. Her organization asked the Committee to adopt a resolution reaffirming that the question of Guam was a question of decolonization to be settled by the Chamoru people, and holding the administering Power accountable to the Plan of Action under the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

26. *Ms. Naputi Borja withdrew.*

27. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Leon Guerrero (Guahan Indigenous Collective) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

28. **Ms. Leon Guerrero** (Guahan Indigenous Collective) said that her homeland was threatened by the steady exodus of native Chamorus who could no longer afford to live on Guam and were being replaced by United States military personnel.

29. As the administering Power, the United States had the moral and legal responsibility to protect the assets and human rights of the Chamoru people and ensure their self-determination. It had, moreover, failed to pay any reparations to the people of Guam for the atrocities endured during the Second World War. The United States military presence on Guam, a legacy of that war, had been devastating to the survival of the people's language and culture, their right to choose their own form of government and elect their leaders and their right to own ancestral land. Another legacy of the war was the toxic pollution of the land and surrounding waters by nuclear and other carcinogenic waste, with an impact on the health of the people. Young Chamorus unable to compete for the available jobs were, furthermore, being encouraged to enlist in the United States military, and were dying in disproportionate numbers in United States wars.

30. Earlier in the year, the United States had announced that it would move many thousands more military personnel to Guam, increasing the total population by 25 per cent in the next few years, thus changing Guam's cultural, political, social and ecological environment. The Committee's resolution on the question should point out that the military activities and arrangements by the colonial Power impeded the granting of independence to the Chamoru people and violated their right to survive in their homeland.

31. *Ms. Leon Guerrero withdrew.*

32. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Flores Perez (International Peoples' Coalition Against Military Pollution) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

33. **Ms. Flores Perez** (International Peoples' Coalition Against Military Pollution) said that the estimated influx of 35,000 United States military personnel into a current population of 168,000 scheduled to start in 2007 would significantly alter the island's demographics and political atmosphere. United States immigration policies in Guam had marginalized the Chamoru population, making them a minority of only 37 per cent in their own homeland. The military build-up and the planned expansion of military infrastructure would transform the island into a forward base. The location of bases near water sources had already contaminated the water supply and was threatening the health of the current population, both military and civilian.

34. Unilateral decisions about the future of Guam were being made without the people's consent and participation, which meant that the United States was exploiting Guam politically as a colony rather than supporting the right of the Chamorus to self-determination. The things that Chamorus viewed as important were being stripped away to serve United States strategic interests: their water, their land, their 4,000-year-old culture, and their spirit as a people. The people of a nation should not have to live as second-class citizens, or be displaced through land expropriation and economic pressures.

35. The human rights of the Chamoru people should not be held hostage to a global war on terror that did not seek peaceful means of resolving international differences. The Committee should, in its resolution on the question of Guam, strongly encourage the administering Power to fund the island's decolonization, to clean up toxic military sites and

return the lands to the people, and to stop making the Non-Self-Governing Territory a storage facility capable of launching weapons of mass destruction in Asia.

36. *Ms. Flores Perez withdrew.*

37. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Naputi Lacsado (National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

38. **Ms. Naputi Lacsado** (National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum), speaking as a member of the Chamoru diaspora in the United States, said that United States cultural hegemony and its military tainting of the land, bloodlines and spirit of the Chamorus and other Pacific islanders did not allow for the survival of the Chamoru language and traditions, which were on the verge of extinction. The United States military-industrial complex on Guam had had a serious human impact and would only stunt progress towards self-determination, which the United States was obligated to ensure. The Chamoru people themselves had forgotten that they were entitled to choose a society that would serve no other interests but their own and often believed that there was no other option but a militarized one. The people had to be educated out of such absolute military and economic dependence and alternative opportunities had to be created.

39. The Committee must act to stop the military occupation of Guam. It could begin by directly engaging the Guam Commission on Decolonization and grass-roots groups such as the one she represented.

40. *Ms. Naputi Lacsado withdrew.*

41. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Castro (Chamoru Cultural Development and Research Institute) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

42. **Ms. Castro** (Chamoru Cultural Development and Research Institute) observed that the traditions of the Chamoru people held the land in great reverence, saw the people as its respectful caretaker, and exalted the values of honour and family. If the Chamorus had survived hundreds of years of colonization, genocidal wars, disease and nuclear fall-out, it was thanks to the strength of their living history.

43. Guam was now, however, facing a new and serious threat: the new world order of global Western hegemony, which, seeking to reap economic profit, was enslaving the peoples of the Marianas Islands in the guise of ensuring peace. Yet the people thus subjugated sought freedom and the basic right to self-determination, and an end to the madness of war. The immense, intensifying military build-up promised by the United States had the potential either for worldwide destruction or for a world coming together into consciousness.

44. The nations of the international community had the power to break the cycle of colonialism, and in that noble endeavour the indigenous voice must be given an equal presence to tell of its heritage and its diverse culture that were being systematically destroyed for the sake of keeping colonial order.

45. *Ms. Castro withdrew.*

Question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/61/4 and Add.1, 3 and 7)

46. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Wilson (U.S.-Western Sahara Foundation) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

47. **Mr. Wilson** (U.S.-Western Sahara Foundation) said that much had been said about each new development in the recent history of Western Sahara, beginning with the formation in May 1973 of the Frente POLISARIO, followed by the establishment, in March 1976, of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic, the agreement in August 1978 between the Frente POLISARIO and Mauritania, the guerrilla warfare waged for 15 years by Frente POLISARIO, the establishment of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), the ceasefire of 1991, the introduction of the Baker Plan in 2001, the compromise resolution adopted by the United Nations in 2003 proposing that Western Sahara should become a semi-autonomous region of Morocco for up to five years and, finally, the resignation of the Special Representative, Mr. James Baker, which had left the United Nations process deadlocked. Many more words had been spoken since then and there was nothing left to say. It was therefore time not for words but for action. All parties could agree that the Saharans should return to their homeland.

48. *Mr. Wilson withdrew.*

49. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Chauprade (University of Paris) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

50. **Mr. Chauprade** (University of Paris) recalled that, at the sixtieth session, he had given the Committee an outline of the political history of Western Sahara. Over the past year, however, there had been disturbing developments, including a rise in terrorism, crime and illegal immigration from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe, which had caused some States to call for drastic solutions.

51. Geopolitical factors were working together to produce the worst possible outcome. On the one hand, there was the danger of the rise of an extremist separatist movement, which would work in conjunction with criminal elements, while, on the other hand, the authority of the Frente POLISARIO had diminished greatly over the past 10 years, partly as a result of the moves by Morocco to allow the region greater autonomy. Lacking popular support, the Frente POLISARIO was engaging increasingly in organized crime and illegal immigration.

52. If the choice for the future lay between the moves by Morocco towards proper development of the region, together with more autonomy and repatriation for Saharans living in the camps, and a revolutionary movement that was drifting into crime, it was not hard to see which was preferable. Morocco should be supported in its efforts to bring the region into a more settled state.

53. *Mr. Chauprade withdrew.*

54. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Huff (Teach the Children International) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

55. **Ms. Huff** (Teach the Children International) said that, over the past seven years, she had facilitated the sending of many containers of food, medical supplies and children's gifts to the camps occupied by the Saharans. She herself had distributed gifts to children and she challenged Morocco to allow her to distribute such gifts to the children of Morocco and the occupied Western Sahara. If there was corruption, she requested solid evidence and full publicity for any misdeeds. The United Nations should spare no resources in finding those responsible, because, so long as there was corruption, the people would remain in bondage.

56. The goal to aim for was justice and freedom for the Saharan people. She urged the United Nations to open negotiations between the Saharans and Morocco, based on the Settlement Plan or the Peace Plan for the Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara. The Saharan people held to the truth of freedom and democracy and she pleaded on their behalf that they should be allowed to return to their homeland as a free people who could enforce a constitution that had already been written. The United Nations should not stand aside while such people as Ms. Aminatou Haidar were imprisoned and beaten for demonstrating for the right to vote. There was a stark contrast between her plight and the opulence of the United Nations facility near Tindouf.

57. She urged the Committee to provide the framework for a speedy referendum for the people of Western Sahara; to put pressure on Morocco to agree to a referendum; to ensure that Saharan children and their families could leave the refugee camps and return to their homeland quickly and peacefully; and to enable more families in the camps to visit their relatives in Western Sahara.

58. *Ms. Huff withdrew.*

59. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Hagen (Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

60. **Mr. Hagen** (Norwegian Support Committee for Western Sahara) said that the Moroccan State oil company was crystal clear in its intention to speed up oil exploration activities in the occupied Western Sahara. The United States oil company, Kosmos Energy, which had a contract with the Moroccans, had already chartered a drilling vessel and announced plans to drill in Western Sahara — or "Morocco", as they called it — by 2007 despite a recent United Nations legal opinion that defined both exploitation and further exploration as illegal. Moreover, both the local population and the Frente POLISARIO were opposed to the plan.

61. Such commercial activities had clear political implications, in that they lent legitimacy to the Moroccan presence in the area. The Norwegian Ministry of Finance had stated that oil exploration in Western Sahara was a particularly serious violation of fundamental ethical norms because it might strengthen Morocco's sovereignty claims and thus contribute to undermining the peace process. The Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, article 16, paragraph 2, contained the following provision: "No State has the right to promote or encourage investments that may constitute an obstacle to the liberation of a

territory occupied by force." Yet bulk carriers sailed regularly to every part of the world loaded with phosphates and other goods stolen from Western Sahara, while the European Union had recently entered into an agreement with Morocco that allowed European Union fishing vessels into the occupied waters of Western Sahara.

62. In times past, the Security Council had imposed sanctions on South Africa to stop its plundering the wealth of Namibia. Although the situation of Western Sahara was similar, no sanctions had been imposed to prevent its wealth being plundered.

63. The presence of foreign companies and States working for Moroccan interests in the occupied areas constituted a serious obstacle to resolving the conflict. Apart from a few States, such as Norway and Sweden, which had officially discouraged investment in the region, hardly any State was taking a really proactive role in prohibiting commercial activities in Western Sahara. That was far from sufficient. He urged the Committee to consider ways and means of preventing foreign countries and States from prolonging the occupation by illegally profiting from the Moroccan presence in Western Sahara.

64. *Mr. Hagen withdrew.*

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 5th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 5 October 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Acharya ..... (Nepal)
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Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*)

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06-55493 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other items) (*continued*)

Hearing of petitioners (*continued*)

Question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/61/4/Add.4, Add.6, Add.8, Add.12, Add.13, Add.15-18, Add.21-25, Add.27, Add.29 and Add.32-35)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Lenz (Christ the Rock Community Church) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

2. **Ms. Lenz** (Christ the Rock Community Church), said that in the eight years she had been working in Saharan refugee camps, she had become increasingly aware of the broken promises that forced the people of Western Sahara to suffer inhumane conditions while waiting for the right to self-determination. There was a cruel game of politics, hidden agendas to steal natural resources and media manipulation to convince the world that the violent invader, Morocco, was the champion of the Saharans and even that the Saharans did not really exist.

3. The Saharans had played by the rules and had respected their ceasefire with Morocco. They had still not held a referendum for self-determination, yet they cast their votes for true freedom — not the freedom of a regime that had forced them from their homes — daily, with their lives. She urged the Committee to lead the world and to organize a referendum to allow the Saharan people the right to self-determination.

4. *Ms. Lenz withdrew.*

5. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Morillas Gómez (University of San Pablo) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

6. **Mr. Morillas Gómez** (University of San Pablo), said that Western Sahara was still the sacrificial victim of the Spanish transition of power to Morocco and the situation had not benefited anyone. Moreover, the billions of dollars invested in Western Sahara was preventing Morocco from investing in its own infrastructure. Morocco would not develop if it did not abandon Western Sahara.

7. A parallel could be drawn with the situation of Indonesia in Timor-Leste; Indonesia, despite its great commercial power, had sacrificed its capital and its people during 30 years of occupying Timor-Leste. The resulting poverty and discontent had provided fertile ground for Islamic fundamentalism and had culminated in the terrorist attacks in Bali.

8. Maintaining the status quo was weakening Morocco by fuelling Islamic fundamentalism, halting economic development, increasing illegal immigration and expanding the cultivation and trafficking of drugs. It was encouraging a narcofundamentalism more dangerous than the Colombian narcoguerrilla in the Straits of Gibraltar.

9. He called on the United Nations to activate the process of self-determination and to finance the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) with Morocco's gains from exploiting the natural resources of Western Sahara. Those resources should be protected, as had been done in Namibia. The Saharans were an open, hardworking and cosmopolitan Muslim people and an ally against terrorism. By contrast, Morocco, one of the closest Muslim countries to the West, was producing the most terrorists. Indeed, the perpetrators of the greatest terrorist massacre in the history of Western Europe — the attacks of 11 March 2004 — had been led by terrorists from Morocco.

10. *Mr. Morillas Gómez withdrew.*

11. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Strömdahl (Swedish Western Sahara Committee) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

12. **Mr. Strömdahl** (Swedish Western Sahara Committee) said that although an end to the conflict in Western Sahara had been within reach many times, every time Morocco had refused to follow through. Moroccans had been forced to choose between prison and spying for the Government and had been bribed to vote for Western Sahara's integration into Morocco.

13. There was broad popular action under way by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Sweden. His organization's platform for action contained suggestions in breaking the deadlock: they included the release of Saharan political prisoners, the holding of a referendum for self-determination, an end to the exploitation of natural resources, increased humanitarian aid to refugee camps for Frente

POLISARIO and requiring Morocco to leave Western Sahara.

14. *Mr. Strömdahl withdrew.*

15. *Ms. Bolanos-Pérez (Guatemala), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

16. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Lord Newall (International Committee for Prisoners of Tindouf) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

17. **Lord Newall** (International Committee for Prisoners of Tindouf) said that his organization had been created to denounce the plight of the prisoners of Tindouf and to demand their immediate release. Noting that some of the 404 Moroccan prisoners of war released on 18 August 2005, had been detained for over 25 years, and that, according to France Libertés, 120 of their comrades had died in prison, 27 of them under torture, he called for an international inquiry into the fate of those who had disappeared in the camps. Moreover, the bodies of those who had died there must be recovered. The Government of Algeria must provide compensation for the torture and abuse suffered by victims illegally imprisoned on its territory.

18. He also called on the international community to look into the conditions of the Saharans living in the Tindouf camps. The only viable solution to the conflict in Western Sahara was a negotiated political settlement between Morocco and Algeria. The Committee must work to bring about such a solution.

19. *Lord Newall withdrew.*

20. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Aït-Baala (Action Internationale Femmes) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

21. **Ms. Aït-Baala** (Action Internationale Femmes) said that the popular uprising of May 2006 had aggravated the already deplorable human rights situation in the Tindouf camps and had clearly demonstrated that the Frente POLISARIO was sustained by a military system in the so-called refugee camps and by the Algerian regular army. After the uprising, telephone lines installed by the High Commissioner for Refugees had been cut and the camps surrounded. Members of the Rguibat Laâyaycha tribe had been targeted in particular for severe punishment.

22. The Frente POLISARIO leaders continued to divert international humanitarian aid and to deceive the international community about living conditions in the Tindouf camps while the international community remained silent. Meanwhile, the Tindouf region was becoming the breeding ground for all forms of illicit trafficking, smuggling, weapons trade, smuggling of migrants and terrorist groups. She called for aid and protection for the camp populations and demanded that the Frente POLISARIO leadership and the Algerian authorities lift the blockade against the people and allow them freedom of expression. The international community must exert pressure on Algeria to undertake direct negotiations with Morocco in order to end the artificial conflict of Western Sahara so as to avert a genocide similar to that of Rwanda.

23. *Ms. Aït-Baala withdrew.*

24. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Castellano San Ginés (Member of Parliament of the Canary Islands) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

25. **Mr. Castellano San Ginés** (Member of Parliament of the Canary Islands) said that the Canary Islands were geographically so close to Morocco that they also bore the consequences of the conflict. They must commit to the development of Africa for the benefit of the entire continent.

26. The division of the African territory by European colonial powers had resulted in a complex reality that ignored the interests of the Saharan people. General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV) was confusing and difficult to implement. The right to self-determination was an instrument that had been devised for the decolonization of territories administered by distant Western powers and its application to Western Sahara was questionable. Efforts to organize a referendum had failed because the two parties differed in their opinions of who could vote.

27. He welcomed the proposal to grant broad autonomy to Western Sahara within the territory of Morocco even though it was not connected to a subsequent referendum for self-determination, for it would open a space for reasonable political debate of the situation. The proposal did not imply renunciation of the political aspirations of either party or of the legal and political status of the region. It would provide for a mechanism for settling differences by broad consensus within a plural, democratic framework, and for ending the suffering of the Saharan people. The formula was somewhat similar to that adopted in the Canary Islands within the context of Spain and would involve a degree of self-government.

28. In order to achieve that end both parties would have to agree, among other issues, on the scope of the autonomy and the situation of the Saharans in the Tindouf camps. The international community should not condition the solution on geostrategic positions. It was time to close the file on Western Sahara by accepting autonomy within the territory of Morocco in order to give the Saharan people a better life and a developed society.

29. *Mr. Castellano San Ginés withdrew.*

30. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Cioffi (Popolari Udeur Group) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

31. **Ms. Cioffi** (Popolari Udeur Group) said that it was necessary to find a political solution in Western Sahara to abate the daily suffering of the civilian population in the Tindouf camps in Algeria. In order to provide effective humanitarian aid it was imperative to assess the exact number of people in need of aid, including the number of people living in the Tindouf camps. To carry out that assessment, Algeria should authorize international organizations to carry out periodic censuses in the camps. Furthermore, the organizations that provided aid needed to be given unrestricted access to the camps, with a view to guaranteeing the fair distribution of goods. The decision by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) to reduce the number of refugees from 158,000 to 90,000 had made it even more important to target those people who were most in need of aid. To address the humanitarian problem it was important to work together and to secure the cooperation of Morocco and Algeria. The failure to find a solution to the question of Western Sahara threatened to destabilize the entire region and to worsen the levels of terrorism, organized crime and trafficking in persons.

32. *Ms. Cioffi withdrew.*

33. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Warburg (Freedom for All) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

34. **Ms. Warburg** (Freedom for All) said that for over 30 years POLISARIO had violated the most basic of human rights by denying the Saharan people the right to live as families, to travel freely and to express their views. In contravention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the Saharan refugees were denied the right to associate freely and to travel within and beyond Algeria. The Saharan people were subjected to repression, torture and arbitrary imprisonment. In contravention of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, young children were forcibly removed and deported, and many were returned to their families at a later date. That inhuman act was designed to ensure that parents complied with POLISARIO and remained in the camps, with the hope of one day being reunited with their children.

35. The Saharan refugee camps were located in a military zone, with detention centres and military training grounds, despite the fact that in 1987 UNHCR had called on States to maintain the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps. The Convention on Human Rights was insistent on the need to reunite and regroup refugees but the Saharan people were dispersed in four camps in Tindouf at distances varying from 30 to 172 kilometres. In February 2006, torrential rain and flash floods had struck the camps and it had been necessary for UNHCR to provide emergency aid. Rather than mobilize its forces to deal with that humanitarian crisis, POLISARIO had mobilized its forces to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of its self-designated republic. The absence of basic human rights, the harsh living conditions and the repressive POLISARIO regime had provoked riots and rebellions in the Tindouf camps which had been brutally suppressed.

36. The misappropriation of humanitarian aid donated by the international community had serious implications for the welfare of the refugees and the stability and security of the Maghreb and Mediterranean regions. POLISARIO routinely sold that aid in neighbouring countries in order to raise money for the purchase of weapons. The last remaining Moroccan prisoners of war had been released in 2005 but many remained unaccounted for or had been killed in the Tindouf camps. Freedom for All supported claims by the former Moroccan prisoners of war for compensation from the Algerian State for the human rights abuses perpetrated in Algerian Territory and called for detailed information about the prisoners whose whereabouts were still unknown. Freedom for All urged the international community to establish an international commission of enquiry to be sent to Tindouf to investigate the plight of refugees, determine the extent of human rights abuses and bring the perpetrators to justice.

37. *Ms. Warburg withdrew.*

38. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Alonso Rodríguez (Liga Española Pro-Derechos Humanos) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

39. **Mr. Alonso Rodríguez** (Liga Española Pro-Derechos Humanos) said that it was necessary to clarify some of the offensive and inaccurate statements that had been made in relation to Western Sahara. It was clear that the basic right to freedom was being violated in the occupied Territory and, in 2006, a commission of European parliamentarians had been refused entry into the occupied Territory. Visitors were not allowed to witness the conditions in the camps and prisons. Five hundred Saharans were on hunger strike and the general situation was lamentable. At a hearing in Spain in 2006, complaints had been heard about a massacre of the Saharan people in 1975. Those crimes should not remain unpunished and the King of Morocco should not allow any further massacres by Moroccan troops. It was regrettable that the Government of Spain had not adopted a firmer stance on the question of Western Sahara because it was essential not to legitimize the invasion. It was imperative to find a solution to the question of Western Sahara in order to alleviate the suffering of the Saharan people.

40. *Mr. Alonso Rodríguez withdrew.*

41. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Aurrekoetxea (Instituciones Solidarias con el Pueblo Saharaui a nivel del Estado Español) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

42. **Mr. Aurrekoetxea** (Instituciones Solidarias con el Pueblo Saharaui a nivel del Estado Español) said that it was lamentable that the question of Western Sahara had not yet been resolved given that MINURSO, whose objective had been the organization of a referendum on self-determination and independence, had been established in 1991. The Saharan people had established all the necessary international and legal requirements for achieving self-determination by means of a referendum and wanted to find a peaceful solution. That peaceful solution should be based on the advisory opinion given by the International Court of Justice on 16 October 1975, which clearly stated that Morocco had no territorial sovereignty over Western Sahara and General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) was applicable to the question of Western Sahara. The Saharan people were no longer willing to accept the occupation and the only possible solution was decolonization. The Saharan people had waited patiently for more than 15 years for the United Nations to take action to guarantee their inalienable right to self-determination. However, that patience could come to an end. Furthermore, it was important not to forget the tens of thousands of men and women who had suffered under the Moroccan occupation and the hundreds of thousands who had fled to the Tindouf camps in 1975. Conditions in those camps had deteriorated dramatically because basic food stocks were running out and that made the need for a solution even more urgent.

43. *Mr. Aurrekoetxea withdrew.*

44. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Miranda Navarro (Consejo General de la Abogacía Española) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

45. **Ms. Miranda Navarro** (Consejo General de la Abogacía Española) said that the independent legal observers that had been sent from Spain over the years had denounced the continual violation of basic human rights in Western Sahara. In 2006, those denunciations had been supported by the International Bar Association. Those legal observers had attended court hearings against Saharan human rights activists and had travelled throughout the Territory. United Nations resolutions had established that Western Sahara was a Non-Self-Governing Territory that should undergo a process of decolonization and that Morocco was illegally occupying that Territory. The legal observers sent by Spain had noted that Morocco did not have the legal competency to hold trials against Saharan activists. The alleged crimes of the activists had taken place outside Moroccan jurisdiction and the activists were Saharan citizens.

46. The trial of 14 Saharans described as leading human rights activists had been held in December 2005 in the Moroccan city of El Aaiún amid a great deal of tension and a strong police and military presence. Saharans who had attempted to attend the trials or who had been in the vicinity had been beaten. The 14 detainees had been in poor physical condition because of the torture that they had been subjected to and because of their two month hunger strike. The defendants had refused to acknowledge the court's legitimacy. The legal observers had noted that the trials violated international and Moroccan law because the defendants had not been granted the presumption of

innocence, had not been given access to medical treatment and had not been allowed a defence. The court officials had obeyed the orders of the police.

47. *Ms. Miranda Navarro withdrew.*

48. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Assor (Surrey Three Faiths Forum) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

49. **Mr. Assor** (Surrey Three Faiths Forum) said that the food shortages in the Tindouf refugee camps were of Algeria's and the Frente POLISARIO's own making. At the request of donor organizations which believed the numbers of the refugees in the camps had been vastly inflated by Algeria, and in the face of Algeria's refusal to allow a reliable census of the camp inmates, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had done their own calculations and reduced the total by almost 20 per cent to 90,000 inmates; as the Secretary-General had indicated in his report (A/61/121, para. 7), they had reduced the amount of food aid accordingly. Algeria had always refused to allow supervision of the distribution of aid by neutral observers; thus, the Frente POLISARIO, which was in charge, had been able, with Algerian connivance, to misappropriate and re-route elsewhere much of the food for its own profit, as reported by several agencies. The upshot was that the majority of the camp inmates were, in fact, starving. The Frente POLISARIO had been calling for more food aid, even as it spent inordinate amounts on military exercises for show. The Saharan people had indeed become disillusioned with the Frente POLISARIO leaders, who seemed interested only in their own power.

50. UNHCR should be allowed to conduct a census in the camps in order to quantify the real needs. Algeria should be called upon to lift its blockade of the camps, allowing free access to them as well as free movement for the inmates. It was also important to allow the aid agencies themselves to put in place proper management of aid. His organization requested an immediate international investigation into the fraudulent food misappropriation racket that was depriving the people in Tindouf of needed aid.

51. *Mr. Assor withdrew.*

52. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Bahaijoub (Family Protection) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

53. **Ms. Bahaijoub** (Family Protection) said that while the plight of the Moroccan prisoners of war who had suffered for decades in the Tindouf camps had ended, the Algerian authorities had never accounted for the 350 to 500 prisoners who had disappeared while in the camp; nor had the bodies of about 50 Moroccans buried in the camp ever been repatriated — that was a violation of the Geneva Conventions. Algeria had for 15 years ignored the call of the international community to address the issue of those disappeared persons, and it had made no response to appeals from international human rights organizations regarding both the Moroccan prisoners and the Algerians and others who had disappeared throughout Algerian territory since the beginning of the civil war.

54. In view of the various violations perpetrated by the Frente POLISARIO on Algerian territory, an independent inquiry must be launched to clarify the circumstances of those disappearances and to identify those responsible in order to bring them to justice.

55. There was also an urgent need to look into the plight of the civilian population in the Tindouf camps, who were living in inhumane conditions and were subjected to human rights violations and restrictions on freedom of movement, expression and opinion. The alarming food shortage in the camps had been attested to independently, and had become even more critical following the decision by United Nations agencies to reduce the food aid, a decision prompted in part by the inflated numbers provided by the Algerian authorities and in part by the fact that much of that food was being sold in neighbouring countries.

56. She appealed to the Committee to help put an end to the conflict in Western Sahara by encouraging direct negotiations between Morocco and Algeria. A political solution was needed in order to end the suffering and avoid the balkanization of the region.

57. *Ms. Bahaijoub (Family Protection) withdrew.*

58. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Piccolo (City Councilman, Rome) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

59. **Mr. Piccolo** (City Councilman, Rome) said that territorial integrity had always been a very important issue to Morocco. Western Sahara was the last part of its territory to be recovered in 1975. Algeria, claiming to be the defender of international law and proclaiming the slogan of self-determination, had involved itself

deeply in the ensuing conflict in Western Sahara, following a clear strategy, starting with its creation of the Frente POLISARIO and its waging of a proxy war with Morocco. Algeria's geopolitical and geostrategic intentions had been revealed in its 2003 proposal for a partition of the Sahara.

60. The referendum for self-determination in Western Sahara, would, in his view, not resolve the conflict, regardless of its result. Given the nature of Saharan society and the insurmountable obstacles to establishing electoral rolls, it would only complicate the crisis. International institutions had failed to find a solution because they had insisted on framing the problem falsely. As a result, the Maghreb lived in a state of latent war; fraternal peoples who aspired to cooperate and live together in a stable and prosperous region were separated because of the greed of the Algerian governing class. The dream of a united Greater Maghreb was destined to remain simply an illusion.

61. Algeria had refused Morocco's good-faith readiness to negotiate an acceptable political solution. Yet that had not prevented Morocco from endeavouring to establish a democratic and modern state, based on respect for rights and freedoms, in which its citizens were at liberty to express their aspirations. Morocco's proposal to grant broad autonomy to the southern provinces under Moroccan sovereignty was receiving particular attention throughout the world.

62. Through the Committee, he appealed to Algeria and the Frente POLISARIO to enter into direct negotiations with Morocco in order to achieve a mutually acceptable political solution.

63. *Mr. Piccolo withdrew.*

64. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Quatrano (Osservatorio Internazionale) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

65. **Mr. Quatrano** (Osservatorio Internazionale), speaking as criminal court judge and founder of an organization that monitored trials and legal procedures in the countries of the Maghreb and West and Central Africa, said that he wished to speak from his experience as an observer and human rights defender in Western Sahara, which had been occupied illegally by Morocco.

66. On the basis of the report of an international mission of European jurists who had monitored the trials of some militant Saharan human rights defenders, the reports of bodies like Amnesty International that had denounced illegal disappearances and police abuse and a series of complaints from the occupied Territory showing that freedom of thought and civil and political rights were being denied, it could be asserted that the Moroccan authorities were repressing the Saharan population, which demanded in vain the right to self-determination through a referendum. Saharan prisoners should be considered to be prisoners of conscience for they had been arrested simply for having expressed their beliefs. The resistance practiced by the majority of the population was completely peaceful, whereas the police used illegal and violent methods such as disappearance, maltreatment and torture, as he himself had personally ascertained. Trials conducted in the Territory had, according to international observers, not followed due process and had relied on evidence obtained through torture.

67. The serious human rights situation in Western Sahara demanded action. Before any referendum could be held, respect for civil rights and free expression had to be established. MINURSO should therefore be given the additional mandate of monitoring the observance of human rights in the Territory, including the right to demonstrate and the rights of detainees.

68. *Mr. Quatrano (Osservatorio Internazionale) withdrew.*

69. **Mr. El Mojahdi** (Association Sahraoui des droits de l'homme (ASDH)) said that he himself had sacrificed for his country by spending 24 years in prisons and concentration camps in the western part of the Sahara. He had come to plead the Saharan cause before the Committee. The root of the problem was the illegal situation there.

70. While Morocco, like other countries, had committed human rights violations in the past, it had now established the first Ministry of Human Rights in the Muslim world, creating also a body to look into the functioning of the courts that had tried human rights victims. Through its Reconciliation Commission, it had sought to develop the tools for national reconciliation and to learn from the experience of other countries. Those efforts represented qualitative leaps, and were due to the young King's goodwill and interest in democracy. The aspirations of young Moroccans and perhaps those of the Saharan people could be realized as well.

71. He regretted that the question was still on the agenda. With the goodwill of the neighbouring countries, however, all parties to the conflict could come before the Committee during the next session to set out their positions, in the interests of achieving stability and good-neighbourliness and working towards a united Maghreb.

72. *Mr. El-Mojahdi withdrew.*

73. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ducarme (Member, Belgian Parliament) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

74. **Mr. Ducarme** (Member, Belgian Parliament), citing his independent analysis of the question of human rights in Western Sahara, arrived at in conjunction with members of Lawyers Without Borders and the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Centre, said that United Nations attempts to organize a referendum were bound to fail until such time as Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO reached agreement on an updated census to establish the electoral rolls. It was to be hoped that the latest Moroccan proposal to grant a broad measure of autonomy to Western Sahara would reopen the debate in the United Nations.

75. The release of the last Moroccan prisoners of war from the Frente POLISARIO camps had provided conclusive evidence that the latter had committed human rights violations such as torture and forced labour, for which it had as yet not been prosecuted. Morocco, on the other hand, had in 2004 recognized that human rights violations had been committed by its officials on the basis of an enquiry by a royal commission, and had compensated many of the victims.

76. His own independent humanitarian mission to the Tindouf camps had, based on the first-hand reports collected, concluded that the education of the children in the camps, rigidly doctrinaire and militaristic, often involving years of further indoctrination in Cuban camps, violated a number of the criteria of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. The United Nations should, consequently, reconsider providing any educational assistance for Saharan refugees in the Tindouf camps until the Frente POLISARIO's educational system had been overhauled. He wished to note that the humanitarian organization to which he belonged wanted to see all necessary humanitarian aid provided to those in the Tindouf camps, but in no way supported the Frente POLISARIO politically.

77. It was clear that sustained interest in the establishment of human rights in Western Sahara would be central to the possibility of a political settlement there. Any new political rights given to the Saharan people would not be operative unless they were also guaranteed the observance of all their other basic rights. He believed that the European Union should improve its cooperation with the Mediterranean region with respect to immigration and political, social and economic assistance.

78. *Mr. Ducarme withdrew.*

79. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Cervone (Christian Democrat and People's Parties International) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

80. **Ms. Cervone** (Christian Democrat and People's Parties International) said that, despite the unequivocal recognition by the International Court of Justice in 1975 of the bonds between Western Sahara and Morocco, Algeria shamelessly continued to use the issue to undermine Morocco's territorial integrity. The international community was only just waking up to Algeria's scandalous behaviour. The Algerian Government continued to demand humanitarian aid for the innocent refugees that it held by force in its territory even though it had thousands of dollars at its disposal.

81. A particularly disturbing development — which had been ignored by human rights and children's NGOs — was the annual deportation of hundreds of children, ostensibly for the sake of their education but in reality to indoctrinate them. Such deportations were used by the Frente POLISARIO, with Algeria's blessing, as a way of putting pressure on the children's parents to remain in the camps at Tindouf. One girl had been forced to witness her father's stoning by members of the Frente POLISARIO before she was deported, as she had told the Committee the previous year.

82. The international community should assume its responsibilities and come to the aid of the refugees, especially the children. The blame for the situation did not lie only with the Frente POLISARIO, which could take no action except on the instructions of its Algerian partners or with their authority. The Algerian authorities could not evade their moral, political or material responsibility in that regard. If it had not been

for Algeria's attitude, the "question of Western Sahara" would never have existed and the peoples of the Maghreb would have a better life.

83. *Ms. Cervone withdrew.*

84. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Moniquet (European Strategic Intelligence and Security Centre) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

85. **Mr. Moniquet** (European Strategic Intelligence and Security Centre) said that an independent internal mission of inquiry, of which he had been a member, had interviewed several dozen people in Rabat and Laayoune about the situation in Western Sahara; the Algerian authorities had not permitted a visit to Tindouf. Witness after witness had provided damning testimony. It was clear that, over the past 20 years, the leadership of the Frente POLISARIO and its security officials had been responsible for wave upon wave of repression directed against hundreds of its own members and against the Saharan refugees in the camps who were theoretically under its protection. Like other totalitarian movements, the Frente POLISARIO had conducted purges, its aim being both to eliminate possible rivals to President Abdelaziz of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and to justify its being on a war footing.

86. The repression had resulted in a whole range of crimes and abuses. There had been extrajudicial arrests that amounted to abduction or forced disappearances. Those "arrested" were never brought before a judge or anybody having proper legal status and were never informed how long their sentences would be.

87. There was also a widespread use of torture. Conditions of detention — in the Rashid prison, for example — were intolerable. Prisoners were held underground in cells, in which it was impossible to stand upright. There were 118 such cells. Some witnesses had been held there for several years and had been allowed out for only a few minutes a day. Once incarcerated, prisoners were known only by the number of their cell. Other prisoners were put to forced labour. The food was bad and medical care virtually non-existent.

88. There had also been some extrajudicial executions, often accompanied by acts of barbarism. The committee of inquiry had obtained a list of 43 people who had died under torture or been summarily executed. It also had a list of several dozen alleged torturers.

89. For all those reasons, the commission of inquiry believed that the Frente POLISARIO should not be considered a proper participant in discussions on a political solution to the question of Western Sahara.

90. *Mr. Moniquet withdrew.*

91. *Ms. De Roeck (Belgian Parliamentary Intergroup "Peace for the Sahrawi People") took a place at the petitioners' table.*

92. **Ms. De Roeck** (Belgian Parliamentary Intergroup "Peace for the Sahrawi People") said that she had learned from her contacts with Saharans and visits to Morocco and the occupied territories, that violence was again on the rise in the occupied territories of Western Sahara. Peaceful demonstrations had been harshly put down, prisoners were tortured and some deaths had occurred. In 2005, she had gone to the occupied territories at the invitation of a Moroccan association in Belgium. Although she had been given a choice as to her destination, she had been allowed to stay in Laayoune for only a few hours and been prevented from seeing Dakhla and the Black Prison.

93. Morocco had invested heavily in Laayoune but its investment formed part of a wider annexation policy. It had invested 10 per cent of its national budget in Laayoune and Western Sahara, even though the region contained only 3 per cent of the Moroccan population. The policy was to encourage people to relocate to the area. Saharans who returned of their own accord from the camps received free accommodation for the rest of their lives, free education and benefits for 2 years until they found work. Such treatment was in strong contrast with the situation in northern Morocco, where half the population was illiterate and there were almost no health services.

94. Morocco gave the world the impression that it sought a solution. It acknowledged that it did not favour a referendum but had drawn up a proposal for Saharan autonomy under the Moroccan flag. The proposal was markedly different from the revised Baker Plan and she was sure that the Saharan population in the refugee camps and the occupied territories would never accept it.

95. The United Nations should not allow the question of Western Sahara to be forgotten. The Saharan people should be able to express their will through a

referendum. It was time for the referendum to take place and for the brutal occupation to come to an end.

96. *Ms. De Roeck withdrew.*

97. **Ms. Fernandez Toledano** (Cuba), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the statement by Mr. Ducarme constituted a gross calumny against the Cuban Government and people. Cuba attached great importance to education and considered it a moral duty to help provide access to education for the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It had therefore, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 56/68, 57/134, 58/105, 59/130 and 60/113, offered scholarships to 500 students from such territories. Instead of insulting Cuba, the petitioner should urge States that were more developed and had more resources to follow Cuba's example.

Question of New Caledonia (A/C.4/61/5)

98. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Mapou (Comité Rheebu Nuu) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

99. **Mr. Mapou** (Comité Rheebu Nuu) said that the indigenous people of New Caledonia, the Kanak people, were seeking to recover their sovereignty over their mineral wealth — mainly nickel — which the multinational companies sought to appropriate. The decolonization process had already begun and, according to the Nouméa Accord of 5 May 1998, should be completed by 2019 at the latest. It was, however, doubtful whether the administering Power, France, was conducting the process in good faith and whether the process could proceed in accordance with the rules set by the international community.

100. He expressed the hope that the forthcoming seminar on decolonization could be held in New Caledonia and that a special representative of the Secretary-General could come to establish the status of the Kanak people. The principles and rights enshrined in international documents should be incorporated in the Nouméa Accord. The situation as it stood was that the Kanak people faced an attempt at recolonization under the pretext of development and democracy. Meanwhile, New Caledonia was at great risk of environmental damage and financial loss at the hands of the multinational companies.

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*)

101. **Ms. Pierce** (United Kingdom) responding to the statement made at the fourth meeting by the representative of Spain, informed the Committee that, following an extended period of initiation between the United Kingdom and a delegation representing Gibraltar, led by the Chief Minister, a new draft constitution for Gibraltar had been agreed, providing for a modern and mature relationship between the United Kingdom and Gibraltar. As the Chief Minister of Gibraltar had said, the relationship between the United Kingdom and Gibraltar was "non-colonial".

102. The new constitution would shortly be put to the people of Gibraltar in a referendum to be organized by the Government of Gibraltar. The referendum would be an exercise of the right of self-determination by the people of Gibraltar.

103. The United Kingdom was ready to assume its international and national responsibilities. Its views on "de-listing" territories from the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, were well known. The Government also believes that the criteria used by the Special Committee of 24 in its deliberations on whether a Non-Self-Governing Territory should be de-listed, were outdated and failed to take account of the way that the relationship between the United Kingdom and its overseas territories had been modernized. At the same time, the United Kingdom did not believe that the principle of territorial integrity was applicable to the decolonization of Gibraltar.

104. It was gratifying that, after nearly two years of intense negotiations, the United Kingdom Minister for Europe, the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Chief Minister of Gibraltar had been able to announce a first package of agreements. The package covered Gibraltar Airport, border flows, telecommunication, and pensions issues. Her Government welcomed the outcome of the dialogue, which would have a positive impact on the quality of life for the people of Gibraltar and the surrounding region, and believed that, despite the well-known differences on sovereignty matters, it was possible for the three parties to work together for the benefit of all concerned.

105. On the question of sovereignty, her Government stood by its long-standing commitment to the people of Gibraltar that the United Kingdom would never enter into arrangements or sovereignty negotiations as a result of which the people of Gibraltar passed under the sovereignty of another State against their will.

106. Her Government had no doubt that, as a separate territory, recognized by the United Nations and included, since 1946, in its list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, Gibraltar enjoyed the rights accorded by the Charter of the United Nations. Her Government therefore supported the right to self-determination of the people of Gibraltar, promoted in accordance with the other principles and rights of the Charter, except insofar as, in the Government's view, Article X of the Treaty of Utrecht gave Spain first right of refusal, should the United Kingdom ever renounce sovereignty. Thus her Government's position was that there was no constraint to that right to self-determination, except that independence would be an option for Gibraltar only with Spain's consent.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/61/SR.6

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 6th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 6 October 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Acharya ..... (Nepal)
later: Mr. Andersson (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Sweden)
later: Mr. Acharya (Chairman) ..... (Nepal)

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Agenda item 38: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*)*

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items)*

* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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06-55679 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other items) (*continued*)

Hearing of petitioners (*continued*)

Question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/61/4/Add.9-Add.11, Add.20, Add.28, Add.30 and Add.31)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ahl Mayara (Association de l'unité et de la réconciliation) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

2. **Mr. Ahl Mayara** (Association de l'unité et de la réconciliation) said that the conflict in Western Sahara was a threat to peace and security in the region. Had there been true will to negotiate a political solution, the issue would not have taken such a dangerous turn. He had hoped that the action of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), with the participation of his association, would have led to a viable plan for peace. However, it had been impossible for MINURSO to implement the settlement proposals. MINURSO's Identification Commission had concluded that the majority of the population in the Sahara region and in the south of Morocco thought that the best solution was autonomy.

3. By proposing that the people of Western Sahara be granted regional autonomy Morocco had demonstrated a willingness to find a solution that would ensure peace, prosperity and development for everyone in the region.

4. *Mr. Ahl Mayara withdrew.*

5. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ballali (Association of Saharan Parents and Victims of Repression) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

6. **Mr. Ballali** (Association of Saharan Parents and Victims of Repression) said that the 1997 Houston Agreement had marked the beginning of a new approach to finding an inclusive and equitable solution and he believed that it had become clear that that solution was wide autonomy. The United Nations had called for a negotiated political solution. Such a solution needed to foster unity in the Maghreb so as to protect the region from the threats of balkanization and international terrorism. Algeria must lend a helping hand so that refugees scattered in Mauritania, Algeria and Spain could return to their land. He believed that the implementation of wide autonomy that respected local identity and traditions would be well received, even by Saharans living in other lands and he appealed to the United Nations to make efforts to convince Frente POLISARIO and Algeria to think long and hard about this proposal. The Saharan people had suffered for 30 years; that was enough.

7. *Mr. Ballali withdrew.*

8. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Jávega Soley (Asociación Saharaui para la Defensa de Derechos Humanos) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

9. **Ms. Jávega Soley** (Asociación Saharaui para la Defensa de Derechos Humanos (ASADEDH)) said that one possible intermediate solution to the conflict would be to declare Western Sahara an autonomous region within the Kingdom of Morocco. As such it would have legislative autonomy, executive power within the legal order of the state and its own representatives and Morocco's territorial integrity would be preserved. Spain was an example of such a system, for it had 19 autonomous communities — all within the legal framework of the Constitution of 1978 — each of which had issues that were governed centrally, jointly and autonomously, and each of which decided how far it participated in the central government. The Spanish system had been functioning for over 25 years. Such a solution would not only change the people's lives for the better but also allow the Kingdom of Morocco to grow as a nation at all levels.

10. The true problem was Algeria, which financed and supported the Frente POLISARIO. and which was not interested in a solution and Morocco was suffering the direct consequences. ASADEDH denounced Algeria for refusing to allow a census to be taken of Saharan exiles in Algerian camps and for the serious human rights violations committed on a daily basis in camps managed by the Frente POLISARIO.

11. It supported the call of the Secretary-General for a negotiated, political solution and welcomed the courage shown by the King of Morocco in creating the Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS), in which all the political and tribal leanings of the region would undoubtedly be reflected.

12. *Ms. Jávega Soley withdrew.*

13. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Martín Martín (Partido independiente de Lanzarote (PIL)) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

14. **Mr. Martín Martín** (Partido independiente de Lanzarote (PIL)) said that the artificial conflict was the result of the colonial negligence of Spain and of the Cold War; while its main victims were the Saharans, in particular those living in camps, it had also caused much suffering in Moroccan families. The constant threat that fighting would resume was intolerable. Autonomy for Western Sahara within the Kingdom of Morocco would be a way to end the tragedy of the Tindouf camps and normalize the social, economic and political life of Morocco. PIL was in favour of the proposed autonomy as it would allow the Saharans to maintain their culture and identity within a stable context, encourage a peaceful transition and safeguard their human rights.

15. No attempt to achieve regional stability would be complete if it did not involve Algeria; the latter should seek a peaceful solution with other parties to the conflict. For the Canary Islands achieving stability in the Maghreb and promoting development of the parties involved and of the Canary islands, within a framework of security, had become a moral obligation. PIL was in favour of a solution in which those were neither winners nor losers.

16. *Mr. Martín Martín withdrew.*

17. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Ebbi (Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS) and Comité para la reagrupación de familias saharauis (COREFASA)) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

18. **Ms. Ebbi** (Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS) and Comité para la reagrupación de familias saharauis (COREFASA)) noted that Morocco had proposed that the Saharan people be given broad autonomy over political, economic, social and cultural affairs, within the Kingdom of Morocco. The proposal was widely supported within political and social circles in Morocco.

19. CORCAS had been created on 25 March 2006 and represented both traditional and modern sides of Saharan society. It was made up of five committees. The Saharan people — those in the Tindouf camps as well as those in the national territory — were being called on to participate in that historic event. Autonomy would ensure stability and provide an honourable way out, leaving neither winners nor losers.

20. *Ms. Ebbi withdrew.*

21. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Bouh (Former member of the political bureau of the Frente POLISARIO) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

22. **Mr. Bouh** (Former member of the political bureau of the Frente POLISARIO) said that although the issue of Western Sahara had been presented as an issue of decolonization it was, in fact, a struggle for regional supremacy, in which the Saharan people were being used as pawns. After citing some examples of the Algerian Army's direct involvement in events, he said that, notwithstanding the Government's claims about its good intentions, it was clear that Algeria was behind all the actions taken by the Frente POLISARIO.

23. General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 was not, in fact, applicable to Western Sahara, for the majority of the Saharan population lived peacefully in southern Morocco. More than 40 Saharans had been elected to positions in administration or the national parliament.

24. Given that the conflict had been going on for nearly 30 years, it was high time the international community took firm steps to seek a definitive solution based solely on the interests of the Saharan people. The creation of the Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS) demonstrated the clear will of Morocco to arrive at a solution. The majority of the Saharan people fully supported the proposal for autonomy. Yet the efforts of Morocco and others were being blocked by the Algerian authorities. He called on his old friends of the Frente POLISARIO to help build a better future, and put a stop to the conflict so that the military arsenal of the Frente POLISARIO, supported by Algeria, would not further fuel terrorism in the region. Complete separation was impossible and would bring about civil war among the Saharans. Autonomy was the best guarantee of regional security and calm.

25. *Mr. Bouh withdrew.*

26. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Boukhari (Frente POLISARIO) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

27. **Mr. Boukhari** (Frente POLISARIO) said that the colonial occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco represented a challenge to the authority and principles

of the United Nations. In his report on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2006/249), the Secretary-General had recalled that Morocco's sovereignty claim had not been recognized by any State. Furthermore, the Secretary-General had stated that the United Nations could not endorse any peace plan for Western Sahara that excluded the right of the Saharan people to self-determination. The Secretary-General had also expressed his concern about human rights abuses in Western Sahara. The cruelty of the Moroccan repression against the Saharan people was unspeakable. In 2005, the mass graves of 50 Saharans who had disappeared after being kidnapped by the Moroccan occupying forces had been uncovered in southern Morocco; 526 Saharan civilians and 151 prisoners of war remained unaccounted for and there were still Saharan detainees in the prison of El Aaiún. The pro-independence demonstrations that had taken place in El Aaiún had been brutally suppressed. Morocco was attempting to hide those facts from the outside world by denying independent observers access to that Territory.

28. Morocco had complicated the peace process and was trying to advocate a solution of autonomy for Western Sahara in the framework of a claim of Moroccan sovereignty. That proposal was completely unacceptable because the Saharan people were the only depository of the sovereignty of that Territory and they were entitled to make their own decisions in a referendum organized by the United Nations. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), the Saharans could decide whether they wanted to be a part of Morocco or opt for independence, and that decision must be respected. Furthermore, the proposal endorsed by Morocco implied putting an end to the ceasefire and threatening the stability of that region as a whole. It was important to remember that the self-determination referendum remained the only mutually acceptable political solution and the only arrangement endorsed by the United Nations. For the Frente POLISARIO, that self-determination referendum was non-negotiable.

29. *Mr. Boukhari withdrew.*

Question of the United States Virgin Islands (A/61/23, chaps. IX and XII)

30. **Mr. Jones** (United States) said that it had come to the attention of his delegation that Mr. Corbin, a resident of the United States Virgin Islands, had requested permission to address the Special Committee in an official capacity. However, the United States Virgin Islands was an insular Territory of the United States and the Government of the United States was the administering Power. Mr. Corbin was not a member of the United States delegation and had no standing to address the Special Committee in an official capacity. While his delegation would not object to Mr. Corbin addressing the Committee on that occasion, that should not be regarded as his delegation's final views on that matter.

31. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Corbin (United States Virgin Islands) took a place at the table.*

32. **Mr. Corbin** (United States Virgin Islands) said that it was the established practice of the Special Committee to grant hearings to the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and his Government welcomed the opportunity to participate in the discussions. Lack of implementation of the decolonization resolutions continued to delay the decolonization process and his Government welcomed the "*Plan of Implementation of the Decolonization Mandate*" contained in document A/60/853. It was only through the careful adherence to all the integrated elements of that plan that the United Nations and the international community could succeed in implementing the General Assembly's mandate. Since 1950, the General Assembly had supported the participation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the work of the United Nations and that participation was critical to the decolonization process.

33. Since 1984, his Government had benefited from associate membership of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) with the concurrence of the administering Power. Associate members had participated as observers in United Nations conferences and special sessions of the General Assembly between 1992 and 2005, with the concurrence of all member States. In 1998 and 2004 ECLAC had adopted two resolutions with a view to determining how its associate members could participate in the relevant programmes of the Economic and Social Council. Some States that had supported that initiative had later raised objections on constitutional grounds. However, those objections seemed misplaced because the Territories participated in other United Nations bodies without similar objections being raised and those objections had delayed the adoption of resolutions. Restricting his

Government's participation in United Nations programmes hindered progress towards self-determination. His Government welcomed the initiative of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to commemorate the year 2007 as the two hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade because the people of the United States Virgin Islands were descendants of Africans who had been captured in that trans-Atlantic slave trade.

34. *Mr. Corbin withdrew.*

Agenda item 35: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/61/23, chaps. VII and XII, and A/61/70)

Agenda item 36: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/61/23, chaps. V and XII)

Agenda item 37: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (*continued*) (A/61/23, chaps. VI and XII, and A/61/62)

Agenda item 38: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/61/66)

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*) (A/61/23 and A/61/121)

35. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said that it was difficult to grasp the bitter past of suffering experienced by peoples under colonialism given that human rights were currently enshrined in a number of international instruments. He then reviewed the various instruments starting with the Charter of the United Nations and ending with General Assembly resolution 55/146 which declared the period 2001-2010 the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

36. **Mr. Barnes** (Liberia) recalled that his country had been at the forefront of the liberation of the African continent from colonial domination and that, in September 1961, as the first African member to serve as President of the Security Council, it had reminded the Council of its Charter obligation that Territories under colonial rule should be allowed to determine their destiny and have control of their natural resources. He appealed to the administering Powers to adhere to the rule of law and democratic principles so that the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories could be granted the right of self-determination. His delegation supported the holding of a referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara and called on all parties to accept the outcome of that referendum.

37. **Mr. Sow** (Guinea) said that while it was regrettable that the decolonization process had stagnated, there had been some positive developments, including the practice of visiting missions, the participation of the administering Powers and representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the work of the Special Committee, the holding of regional seminars, the establishment of a dialogue between the Special Committee and inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations and the dissemination of information on decolonization to the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The fact that the Special Committee had been authorized by the General Assembly to meet at locations other than at United Nations headquarters was also a positive development. His delegation welcomed the progress that had been made in the question of Tokelau and called on the administering Powers of the other Territories to increase their cooperation with the Special Committee.

38. Noting that, despite some positive developments, no solution had been found as yet to the question of Western Sahara, he called on the parties to increase their cooperation with the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, with a view to seeking a fair and definitive political solution that would guarantee peace and stability in the region. The establishment of the Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS) showed that Morocco was willing to work towards a political solution. His delegation hoped that the resolution to be adopted by the current session would be based on the consensus reached at the recent summit of the non-aligned countries in Havana and recommended that the General Assembly should grant

39. *Mr. Andersson (Sweden), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

40. **Ms. Mujuma** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that while little progress had been made towards the eradication of colonialism, the Committee should continue to give priority to the issue and focus on the measures that needed to be taken. All the parties concerned, including the administering Powers, should play an active role in facilitating the implementation of the various General Assembly resolutions and decisions pertaining to decolonization.

41. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the referendum on the future status of Tokelau that had been held earlier in the year. It was reassuring that, although the two-thirds majority necessary to change the Territory's status had not been attained, the Government of New Zealand and the Tokelau Council had agreed to maintain the referendum package of a draft constitution and a draft treaty of free association. Her delegation called on other administering Powers to extend cooperation similar to that extended by New Zealand in support of the right to self-determination and decolonization.

42. Finally, she said that the question of Western Sahara must not be allowed to drag on. A mutually acceptable solution must be found that provided for self-determination by the people of Western Sahara through direct negotiations, without any preconditions. The efforts of the Personal Envoy for Western Sahara should be encouraged.

43. **Mr. Kafando** (Burkina Faso) said that, although some significant results had been achieved, particularly in Africa, colonialism was far from having been eradicated. The Committee should therefore make every effort to complete the task of decolonization, for the latter was, after slavery, the greatest blot on the history of the world.

44. With regard to the question of Western Sahara, it was regrettable that, despite efforts going back over three decades by successive Secretaries-General to find a solution on the basis of numerous initiatives, peace plans, framework agreements, special envoys and calls for cooperation by the parties, no permanent solution had, as yet, been found. His delegation commended the efforts of the Secretary-General, his Personal Envoy to Western Sahara and MINURSO for their work, which, though not easy, remained useful. Peace in the Maghreb was important for the stability of Africa and the world as a whole. His delegation was therefore in favour of a negotiated and consensual political solution on the basis of a frank and constructive dialogue between the parties concerned. It was encouraging that Morocco had expressed itself willing to engage in detailed and constructive negotiations. Indeed, negotiation was the only realistic way forward.

45. **Mr. Antonio** (Angola) said that since little progress had been made over the past few years, the Committee should try to adopt an innovative approach to the decolonization of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. He expressed concern at the lack of progress made on the question of Western Sahara and said that the Committee should begin by reaffirming the already agreed principles. The search for a solution should take into account the right of the people of Western Sahara to choose their own destiny, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1429 (2002). The parties should facilitate the work of the Security Council and the Secretary-General by refraining from making proposals that might hinder smooth progress to a solution. His delegation was concerned by signs of unrest and reports of human rights violations in Western Sahara. It called for a principle-based solution to the problem.

46. **Ms. Abushagour** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that while much had been achieved with regard to the eradication of colonialism, lately progress had been somewhat disappointing. She called on the administering Powers to cooperate unconditionally with the Special Committee, in order to help the peoples under their administration build up their institutions and become self-reliant and should refrain from enacting laws and from taking measures that would permanently bind the citizens of those Territories to them. She further urged the States concerned to stop using the Territories under their administration for military purposes; they should instead safeguard the natural resources in those Territories and compensate their peoples for the consequences of any misuse of their resources and land.

47. Greater effort should also be devoted to enabling peoples under foreign rule to exercise their right to self-determination, irrespective of a Territory's size, number of inhabitants and volume of resources. The Palestinian people continued to suffer under Israeli occupation and to be subjected to siege and starvation and the United Nations was unable to compel the

occupying Power to obey international law. She appealed to all States to cooperate with the Committee in order to eradicate the last surviving pockets of colonialism.

48. *Mr. Acharya resumed the Chair.*

49. **Mr. Maema** (Lesotho), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that, despite the commendable efforts by the Committee, particularly its visits to individual territories to familiarize itself with the situation on the ground, 16 countries remained on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories and no significant progress had been made since Timor-Leste had gained its independence.

50. It was encouraging to see that a referendum had been held in February 2006 to determine the future status of Tokelau although, regrettably, the results of the referendum had not changed the Territory's status. He acknowledged the continued efforts by the Government of New Zealand and the people of Tokelau to support the Territory's move towards greater self-governance and expressed the hope that other administering Powers would follow New Zealand's example.

51. It was regrettable that, despite the Secretary-General's efforts to resolve the question of Western Sahara, the Saharan people continued to be denied their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. SADC urged the Government of Morocco to accept the plan submitted by Mr. James A. Baker III; that would involve the holding of a free and fair referendum in the territory as envisaged in the Settlement Plan for Western Sahara.

52. Finally, SADC called for the effective implementation of the Plan of Action of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2001-2010), for there would be no peace or development so long as there were people living under colonial or foreign occupation and domination.

53. **Mr. Vakulhavanji** (Mozambique), after commending the Secretary-General for his efforts in assisting the parties to reach an acceptable political solution to the question of Western Sahara, said that the issued deserved the particular attention of the international community. His delegation reaffirmed its support for the Settlement Plan as the only legal framework for the definitive solution of the question of Western Sahara and it urged the parties to cooperate fully with the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy and his Special Representative to ensure the implementation of the Plan.

54. **Mr. Sahel** (Morocco) observed that, at Algeria's insistence, the question of Western Sahara was once again on the Committee's agenda. Not only had Algeria been conducting a campaign to impede Morocco's territorial integrity but it was fully responsible for the human tragedy of the Tindouf camps in southern Algeria, where refugees were forcibly held in desolate circumstances and where the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had for 30 years been denied the right to conduct a census. Hundreds of Moroccan prisoners had been beaten, tortured and humiliated and had even died in those centres, in violation of elementary humanitarian law. Algeria should be punished for that crime against humanity.

55. Anxious to end the dispute, Morocco had asked the United Nations to mediate. The United Nations Settlement Plan, however, had subsequently been declared inapplicable by the Security Council itself, while the constructive 2001 draft Framework Agreement proposed by the Secretary-General's then Personal Envoy had later been rejected out of hand by Algeria. The latter had then, in Houston, made a counterproposal, namely, partition of the Sahara and its people — a very selective approach to self-determination. Still later, due to disagreements over the composition of the electoral lists — from which Algeria and the Frente POLISARIO wanted to exclude thousands of legitimate Saharans — the Personal Envoy's proposed 2003 Peace Plan for the Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara had not met with the required consent of the parties. In all resolutions since resolution 1541 (2004), the Security Council had outlined a new course advocated by the international community to break the deadlock — namely, a negotiated political solution. Even the momentum that had thus been created had been blocked by Algeria by its refusal to work with the Secretary-General's new 2004 Personal Envoy; and his 2005 successor had been receiving similar treatment, even though as the Personal Envoy himself had indicated, Algeria held the key to the solution.

56. The international community called on Algeria to abandon its systematic obstruction of the Personal Envoy's current proposals and to stop insisting on the

Peace Plan as the only basis for a settlement. The United Nations-sponsored negotiations must include all parties, including, Algeria; the latter was responsible for starting and sustaining the dispute and should cease pretending that it was not one of the parties.

57. In view of Algeria's rigidity, Morocco had taken the initiative to propose viable autonomy for the inhabitants of the region, allowing them to administer their own affairs within the framework of Morocco's sovereignty and territorial integrity. A broad consultative process with local representatives had begun, at the end of which self-determination under the terms of Security Council resolutions 1514 (2003) and 1541 (2004) and General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) would be offered to the people. Morocco's modern, democratic approach, would allow for the democratic exercise of the individual and collective rights in the Saharan region.

58. Morocco reiterated its willingness to cooperate with the other parties, the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy. It was anxious for a speedy, final solution to the Saharan question in order to relaunch the process of regional integration and help create a prosperous and democratic Maghreb. The Committee's resolution on the question should take account of recent developments, such as the need to break the continuing impasse by moving beyond outdated proposals.

59. **Mr. Ileka** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) urged the parties to the dispute to cooperate in breaking the deadlock and to join in negotiations on an acceptable solution. The Secretary-General and the Security Council must persist in their efforts to work towards a just, lasting and mutually acceptable settlement, which involved negotiations on the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in the context of arrangements that were in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations.

60. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Morocco had twisted the facts. Western Sahara was a Non-Self-Governing Territory on the Committee's list, it was therefore not an issue of a dispute between Morocco and Algeria. No country now recognized Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara. Only a referendum of the people would determine the fate of the Territory.

61. Algeria intended to continue to defend the right to self-determination throughout the world and especially in Africa, where a people was being subjugated by a brother country, itself formerly a colony. Of the so-called proposals outlined by the Moroccan delegation, only the Peace Plan had been unanimously endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 1495 (2003).

62. Morocco had been living outside the law for years and should respect the voice of the Saharan people with regard to their own status.

63. **Mr. Sahel** (Morocco) observed that Algeria specialized in making a travesty of the facts and in referring selectively to the successive proposals for achieving a settlement. It had not even mentioned the proposal it had made in Houston regarding partition.

64. The census issue was an issue only because Algeria opposed inclusion of the Tindouf inmates, as international standards would require.

65. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria) said that there was nothing in any United Nations document to support the allegation that his Government had proposed any partition. On the other hand, Morocco itself had agreed, in 1975, to a partition of the Territory with Mauritania; it would never have done so if, in fact, Western Sahara had been a part of Moroccan territory as it claimed.

66. **Mr. Sahel** (Morocco) observed that delegations were again being treated to a selective reading of the facts. As everyone present was aware, Personal Envoy Baker had often referred to Algeria's partition proposal.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/61/SR.7

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Summary record of the 7th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 11 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Acharya ..... (Nepal)
later: Ms. Bolaños-Perez (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Guatemala)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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06-56349 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

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1. **The Chairman** invited the Chairman to take action on the draft resolutions and draft decisions relating to agenda items 35, 36, 37, 38 and 39.

2. He took it that the Committee agreed to defer considerations of the draft resolution on the question of Western Sahara to the next meeting in order to allow time for further consultations.

3. *It was so decided.*

4. *Draft resolution I on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations* (A/61/23, chap. XII).

5. **The Chairman** said that the Secretariat had informed him that draft resolution I had no financial implications.

6. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

None.

Abstaining:

France, Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

7. *Draft resolution I was adopted by 139 votes to none, with 3 abstentions.**

* The delegation of Cuba subsequently informed the Committee that it had intended to vote in favour of the draft resolutions.

8. **Ms. Alam** (United Kingdom) said that, as in previous years, her country had abstained in the vote on the draft resolution. It did not take issue with the main objective of the resolution, which was to seek compliance with Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations, and would continue to meet its obligations fully in that regard with respect to the United Kingdom Overseas Territories. However, her delegation believed that the decision as to whether a Non-Self-Governing Territory had reached a level of self-government sufficient to relieve the administering Power of the obligation to transmit information under Article 73 *e* of the Charter fell to the government of the Territory and the administering Power concerned, and not to the General Assembly.

Draft resolution II on economic and other activities that affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/61/23, chap. XII)

9. **The Chairman** said that the Secretariat had informed him that draft resolution II had no financial implications.

10. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel

Abstaining:

France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

11. *Draft resolution II was adopted by 146 votes to 1, with 2 abstentions.*

12. **Mr. Desmoures** (Argentina) said that his delegation believed that draft resolution II must be interpreted and implemented in conformity with the relevant General Assembly resolutions on decolonization, particularly resolutions 2065 (XX) and 31/49 and subsequent resolutions on the question of the Malvinas.

Draft resolution III on implementation of the Declaration of the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/61/23, chap. XII)

13. **The Chairman** said that the Secretariat had informed him that draft resolution III had no financial implications.

14. **Mr. Severin** (Saint Lucia) said that in paragraph 12 of draft resolution III, the acronym "ECLAC" should be inserted after "Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean", "the Non-Self-Governing Territories that are" should replace "its" before "associate members", and "of ECLAC" should be inserted after "associate members".

15. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Micronesia (Federated States of), Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

16. *Draft resolution III, as orally amended, was adopted by 99 votes to none, with 53 abstentions.*

17. **Ms. Saloranta** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that States members of the European Union reaffirmed their support for the specialized agencies in their efforts to offer assistance to Non-Self-Governing Territories in the humanitarian, technical and educational fields. However, the statutes of those agencies must be carefully respected, and for that reason, the European Union had again abstained in the vote on the draft resolution.

18. **Mr. Desmoures** (Argentina) said that his delegation valued and supported the work of the Special Committee and had traditionally voted in favour of draft resolution III because it agreed with its objectives and previous texts had correctly reflected the various aspects of decolonization. However, though his delegation did not object to the resolution as a whole, it believed that paragraphs 12, 13 and 14 did not reflect existing draft resolutions of the Special Committee, the General Assembly or of the Economic and Social Council. The decisions of the Special Committee and the General Assembly must be coherent with all resolutions on decolonization, in particular, Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/37 of 27 July 2006. Therefore, Argentina had abstained in the vote.

Draft resolution A/C.4/61/L.4: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories

19. **The Chairman** said that the Secretariat had informed him that draft resolution A/C4/61/L.4 had no financial implications. Egypt had become a sponsor of the draft resolution.

20. *Draft resolution A/C.4/61/L.4 was adopted.*

Draft decision A/C.4/61/L.6 on the question of Gibraltar

21. *Draft decision A/C.4/61/L.6 was adopted.*

Draft resolution IV on the question of New Caledonia (A/61/23, chap. XII)

22. *Draft resolution IV was adopted.*

Draft resolution V on the question of Tokelau (A/61/23, chap. XII)

23. *Draft resolution V was adopted.*

Draft resolution VI on the questions of American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, Saint Helena, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands (A/61/23, chap. XII)

24. **Mr. Severin** (Saint Lucia) said that the sixth preambular paragraph should end after "artefacts and archives" and a new paragraph 6 should be added. The new paragraph would read: "*Welcomes* the cooperation agreements existing between the Territory and Denmark, the former colonial Power of the Territory, on the exchange of artefacts and the repatriation of archival material".

25. *Draft resolution VI, as orally amended, was adopted.*

26. **Mr. Desmoures** (Argentina) recalled that, in accordance with the plan of action for the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, seminars on decolonization could be held only in the Pacific and Caribbean regions and at United Nations Headquarters. The phrase "and other venues" in the twenty-first preambular paragraph of section A of draft resolution VI was therefore inaccurate and inconsistent with the plan of action.

27. With regard to paragraph 2 of section A, his Government reiterated its full support for the right to self-determination of peoples still under colonial domination and foreign occupation, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 2625 (XXV). At the same time, it wished to stress that the reference to self-determination in that paragraph was restricted to the Territories mentioned in the draft resolution. Both the General Assembly and the Special Committee on Decolonization recognized that there were colonial Territories to which self-determination did not apply owing to the existence of a dispute over sovereignty. For example, in the special colonial situation in the Malvinas, the principle of territorial integrity should apply, so as to prevent any attempt to disrupt the national unity and territorial integrity of Argentina. That accorded with General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 2065 (XX), as well as subsequent resolutions on the question adopted by the General Assembly and the Special Committee.

28. **Ms. Alam** (United Kingdom) said that her delegation had reluctantly joined the consensus on the draft resolution, reflecting its full support for the right of self-determination. However, some of the language used in the resolution was unacceptable. Her delegation was concerned that the paragraphs referring to the United Kingdom's Overseas Territories had become increasingly inaccurate and unrepresentative. It was disappointed that its proposed amendments had not been incorporated in the draft resolution. The reputation of the Special Committee would be further diminished if it continued to disregard the views and comments of the administering Powers.

Draft resolution VII on the dissemination of information on decolonization (A/61/23, chap. XII)

29. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-

Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Abstaining:

France.

30. *Draft resolution VII was adopted by 153 votes to 2, with 1 abstention.**

31. **Ms. Alam** (United Kingdom) said that her delegation had voted against the draft resolution because it considered that the obligation imposed on the United Nations to publicize information on decolonization constituted an unwarranted drain on the Organization's scarce resources.

Draft resolution VIII on the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/61/23, chap. XII)

32. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, Kiribati, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Abstaining:

Belgium, France, United States of America.

33. *Draft resolution VIII was adopted by 154 votes to 3, with 3 abstentions.*

34. **Ms. Alam** (United Kingdom) said that, despite the fact that it had voted against the draft resolution, some elements of which were unacceptable, her delegation was committed to modernizing its relationship with its Overseas Territories, while fully taking into account the views of the peoples of those Territories.

Agenda item 30: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (A/61/20 and Corr.1)

35. **The Chairman** said that the initiative to establish a United Nations programme on space-based information for disaster management and emergency response was timely. It would enhance international coordination of disaster management and emergency response through greater use of existing space-based services for all countries, as well as facilitating capacity-building and institutional strengthening for disaster management, particularly in developing countries.

* The delegation of Mali subsequently informed the Committee that it had intended to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

36. Space technology had played a crucial role following the destructive natural disasters that had occurred over the past two years. Satellite images had been used to assess the damage and to help rescuers focus their efforts on the areas requiring the most urgent help. Satellite-based communications had also been used extensively to connect the afflicted areas with the outside world, since terrestrial networks had been all but destroyed. Space-based technology solutions had thus undoubtedly proved their potential in assisting with every phase of a disaster cycle, including preparedness, mitigation, response and reconstruction.

37. The proposed United Nations programme would provide a means to meet several of the commitments agreed to at the 2005 World Summit; to implement the Hyogo Declaration and Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction; to support and strengthen the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa; and to assist developing countries in their efforts to promote and develop national strategies for human resources and for science and technology. The programme could also contribute to other targets, such as helping countries recovering from natural disasters to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and helping developing countries to strengthen their capacities at all levels in order to prepare for and respond rapidly to natural disasters and to mitigate their impact.

38. There were many other areas where space science and technology provided useful tools in the endeavour to overcome the challenges to human development. For example, space applications could contribute to cost-effective water resource management and to the prediction and mitigation of water-related emergencies. In view of the unequal distribution of water resources, space-based solutions to water management were of particular importance to developing countries. Tele-education projects in several countries were bringing high-quality education to students and educators at all levels, including those in remote areas who had no access to schools and universities. Telemedicine made it possible for public health services to be provided for those living in areas with limited health care. Meanwhile, the International Satellite System for Search and Rescue (Cospas-Sarsat) used space technology to assist aviators and mariners in distress around the globe. Cospas-Sarsat currently had 37 member States, representing every continent. Since 1982, it had rescued over 18,000 people in more than 5,000 incidents.

39. The legal regime on outer space safeguarded the orderly conduct of space activities. He welcomed the signature and ratification by a growing number of States of United Nations treaties providing a legal framework for the use of outer space for the benefit of all humankind. In connection with the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space, opened for signature 20 years ago, the Legal Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space was currently studying the practice of States and international organizations in registering space objects.

40. International cooperation was crucial in ensuring that the benefits of space-science technology reached all countries, particularly developing countries. The United Nations, through the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, played a pivotal role in that regard.

41. **Mr. Brachet** (Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space) said that a number of devastating disasters over the past few years had dramatically exposed the vulnerability of human communities to the forces of nature. The integrated and coordinated use of space technologies could play a crucial role in supporting disaster management by providing accurate and timely information. It was therefore of fundamental importance that international coordination in disaster reaction and emergency response should be improved at the global level. An effective way of achieving that was to provide greater access by all countries to space-based services. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) had, therefore, after extensive consultation and analysis, proposed that a programme should be established within the United Nations to provide access to all types of space-based information and services. In addition to providing disaster management support and facilitating capacity-building in developing countries, the programme could extend access to space-based technology solutions across the globe.

42. COPUOS had long since realized that a varied number of space technologies and applications could

solve many of the problems faced by humanity. They could help reduce poverty and prevent infectious diseases and environmental degradation. They could also provide timely information for decision-making in many aspects of economic and social life, regardless of the level of development of the country concerned. They could provide reliable communications where ground networks were not available or had been destroyed.

43. Among the substantive items considered by COPUOS in 2006 had been the implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III); ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes; the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Committee at their 2006 sessions; the spin-off benefits of space technology; space and society; space and water; and recommendations of the World Summit on the Information Society.

44. COPUOS, its two Subcommittees and their action teams and working groups had devoted a great deal of time to considering the recommendations of the General Assembly's five-year review of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III), and, in particular, its Plan of Action (A/59/174, sect. VI.B). The Scientific and Technical Committee's Action Team on Disaster Management had been instrumental in achieving consensus on the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER). Its Working Group on Space Debris had developed space debris mitigation guidelines that were being circulated for approval by governments. Its Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space had conducted a joint workshop with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on a potential technical safety framework for nuclear power sources in outer space. At its most recent session, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had hosted an industry symposium on "Synthetic aperture radar mission and their applications", and planned to hold an International Astronautical Federation (IAF)/Committee on Space Research (COSPAR) symposium on "Use of the equatorial orbit for space applications: challenges and opportunities" at its next session. The International Heliophysical Year 2007 would serve to focus attention on the importance of research cooperation in solar-terrestrial physics. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had also considered a report on coordination of space-related activities among United Nations entities submitted by the United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities.

45. The Legal Subcommittee's working group on practices relating to the registration of space objects had continued its work. Its working group on the application of the five United Nations treaties on outer space had developed a document on the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects. The Legal Subcommittee had also re-established a working group on the definition and delimitation of outer space. It had also attended a symposium organized by the International Institute of Space Law and the European Centre for Space Law on the legal aspects of disaster management and the contribution of space law.

46. The fiftieth session of COPUOS would examine a new agenda item entitled "International cooperation in promoting the use of space-derived geospatial data for sustainable development", whose scope would be more clearly defined over the course of the following two years. A symposium entitled "Space and Forests" had been held at its most recent session.

47. In conclusion, he would be introducing a draft resolution in the Working Group of the Whole of the Fourth Committee covering decisions by the Committee and its two Subcommittees regarding their work for the year 2007.

48. **Ms. Riess** (German Aerospace Center) said that disasters were an increasing challenge, particularly for developing areas. Space-based instruments of Earth observation had the potential to be of enormous benefit in the areas of risk awareness, knowledge management, disaster prevention, and even infrastructure redevelopment. Beyond already existing international mechanisms for coordinating the used of spaced-based information, such as the International Charter on Space and Major Disasters, which had been activated 160 times in the previous year, and the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), there was a clear need for a single global organization to coordinate the application of space-based information to disaster management. The proposed United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER) would allow for horizontal networking within the space

community and vertical networking within the disaster relief community. It would serve as a gateway to space information for disaster management support, a bridge to connect the disaster management and space communities, and a facilitator of capacity-building and institutional strengthening, in particular for developing countries. Products of space observation that had already been used in disaster management included aerial photographs of Darfur, and the tsunami and Pakistan earthquake areas. Photographs supplied instant information on damage and access routes for use in disaster management, and could also supply information on the vulnerabilities of particular areas for use in disaster prevention. It was time to establish a United Nations programme that could provide universal access to all countries and relevant regional and international organizations to all types of space-based information and services to support the full disaster management cycle.

49. *Ms. Bolaños-Perez (Guatemala), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

50. **Mr. Camacho** (United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs) said that the resolution entitled "The Space Millennium: Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development" adopted by UNISPACE III contained 33 major recommendations forming a core strategy for regional and global action to facilitate the implementation of an integrated, global system to manage natural disaster mitigation, relief and prevention efforts through Earth observation, communications and other space-based services, making use of existing capabilities and filling in gaps in worldwide satellite coverage.

51. In 2001, one of the COPUOS action teams had recommended the establishment of the Disaster Management International Space Coordination Organization (DMISCO); and in 2006, an ad hoc expert group appointed to study the possibility of creating an international entity to provide for coordination and the means of realistically optimizing the effectiveness of space-based services for use in disaster management had proposed the establishment of SPIDER (A/AC.105/C.1/L.285). Austria, China, Germany and India had already made commitments to SPIDER of approximately US$ 860,000 and other member States had agreed to support it once it was operational. In agreeing to establish SPIDER, COPUOS had recommended implementing the Platform as a programme of the Office for Outer Space Affairs administered by its Director, and as an open network of providers of support with offices in Beijing and Bonn (A/61/20). The possibility of having a liaison office in Geneva to enhance coordination with the humanitarian response community should be discussed, and a detailed workplan for the biennium 2008-2009 should be prepared for consideration at the forty-fourth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee in February 2007.

52. **Mr. González** (Chile) said that natural disasters had significant consequences that affected national resources and threatened international security. Natural disasters and climate change posed more threats than terrorism and had a very negative impact on the poorest sectors of society. Information was crucial to disaster management programmes; those countries that did not have adequate information were at a disadvantage. The fatalities caused by hurricanes, earthquakes and the effects of El Niño were particularly striking. It was important to remember that what happened in one part of the planet had a direct bearing on other parts of the planet; and to identify and focus special attention on the most significant threats.

53. **Mr. Brachet** (Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space) said that technological advances should be used to benefit society, protect future generations and prevent natural and industrial disasters. Research should contribute to meeting the needs of society; communications, air, sea and land navigation systems and satellite positioning were useful for observing the environment and for making advance weather predictions.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/61/SR.8

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 8th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 12 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Acharya ..... (Nepal)
later: Mr. Andersson (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Sweden)

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Agenda item 30: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

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06-56662 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Agenda item 30: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*) (A/61/20)

1. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that space science and technology and other applications should contribute positively to the collective well-being of humankind. Her Government acknowledged the role of space science and technology training centres and therefore supported the work carried out by the Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for Latin America and the Caribbean. One objective of the Regional Geospace Technology Telecentre, based in Bogotá, was the strengthening of cooperation projects in the Andean region. The Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) had also focused on the development of national capacities so that all States could use and benefit from space science and technology. In July 2005, her Government had established the Colombian Space Commission with a view to preparing national policies for the development and application of space technologies.

2. It was important to establish a clear legal framework for promoting the peaceful uses of outer space and space activities should be aimed at improving living conditions. To that end, her Government had organized symposiums on global satellite navigation systems that focused on applications in cartography, agriculture and navigation. The danger of an arms race in outer space was a great concern, as was the issue of pollution of outer space by space debris. It was also essential to maintain the principle of rational and equitable access for all States to the geostationary orbit.

3. The proclamation of the International Heliophysical Year 2007 would assist in focusing attention on the importance of international cooperation in the field of solar-terrestrial physics. After hosting the Fourth Space Conference of the Americas in 2002, her Government had continued to engage in international cooperation with a view to achieving the goals of the 2002 Cartagena de Indias Declaration. While serving as the Conference's Pro Tempore Secretariat, it had signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (OOSA) in April 2003.

4. **Ms. Kanerva** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Norway and Ukraine, said that the peaceful use of outer space and the use of space applications could be of great benefit to all humankind and could promote sustained economic growth and sustainable development. Space science and technology could contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the goals of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Space was a unique environment that was not subject to claims of national sovereignty. It was the responsibility of all States to ensure that the right to explore outer space and enjoy the benefits was exercised in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and that an arms race in outer space was prevented. Great importance was attached to the work done by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), which should establish practical mechanisms for coordinating its work with that of other related United Nations bodies. The COPUOS proposal to set up a United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER) was a positive development.

5. The increasing commercialization of outer space demanded attention and appropriate international and national legal frameworks. Special attention should also be paid to the increasing pollution of outer space by man-made and natural space debris, although some progress had been made in that regard through the work of the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee, COPUOS, the European Space Agency (ESA) and several European Union countries.

6. Continued international cooperation in the field of space science and technology was essential. The European Union had engaged in important international cooperation in the field of Earth observation by means of the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) initiative and in the field of space technology by developing its own global satellite navigation system, Galileo. ESA had cooperated closely in the development of GMES and Galileo and played a worldwide role. An important

milestone would be achieved when Europe's first polar-orbiting weather satellite, MetOp-A, was launched on 17 October 2006 through a joint programme of ESA and the European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (Eumetsat). Following the strong consensus achieved in General Assembly resolutions 60/66 on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities and 60/54 on prevention of an arms race in outer space, there was a growing convergence of views on the elaboration of measures to strengthen transparency, confidence and security.

7. *Mr. Andersson (Sweden), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

8. **Ms. Hernández Toledano** (Cuba) said that over the past five decades the gap between developed and developing countries in terms of space technology capacities had increased, making it increasingly difficult for developing countries to benefit from space research and its applications. The right of all States to explore and use outer space for the benefit of humankind was a universally accepted legal principle. However, the fact was that not all countries had equitable access to space technology because of its cost. It was therefore vitally important to increase bilateral and multilateral cooperation as called for in General Assembly resolution 51/122. Her Government advocated the establishment of legal rules to promote the rational use of the geostationary orbit by all States. Access to remote sensing data and the capacity to use remote sensing technology must be expanded. Cuba continued to make modest progress in using space science and technology for, inter alia, the improvement of weather forecasting, the application of remote sensing to the mapping of vegetation cover and the prevention of fires, the study of space sciences and teaching.

9. Her delegation reaffirmed the need to defend space on the basis of three principles: the preservation of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes in a way that promoted international cooperation and universal economic development, the rejection of plans to deploy weapons in outer space and the adoption of new monitoring and verification mechanisms for space law. The current legal framework applicable to outer space was insufficient to guarantee the prevention of an arms race in outer space and her Government believed that the Conference on Disarmament should lead the way in urgently negotiating a multilateral agreement on the subject.

10. **Mr. Gidor** (Israel) said that his Government had made great efforts to cooperate with other States and international agencies in promoting the peaceful uses of outer space and had made progress in a number of projects of benefit to the international community. Its space-related activities reflected the COPUOS agenda. The Israel Space Agency (ISA) had been established in 1983 and Israel's OFEQ-1 satellite had been launched in 1988. Its first EROS satellite, developed in conjunction with a United States company, had been launched in 2000 and five Israeli-made satellites were currently orbiting the Earth.

11. Israel continued to use its technological advantages in certain niches, notably small, sophisticated satellites, space propulsion, the global positioning system (GPS) for ground applications and satellite-based technologies such as remote sensing. Israeli academic and research institutes and private companies had played an active role in enhancing international cooperation by establishing a variety of research programmes on remote sensing, an advanced hyper-spectral system and dust storms. In addition, they had been actively engaged in exploring technologies aimed at alleviating some of humankind's most pressing environmental needs. Israeli scientists had been at the forefront of global research on water resource management and the efficient exploitation of limited arable soil. ISA and France's Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales (CNES) had signed an agreement on a joint project aimed at developing, manufacturing and operating a new Earth observation satellite, which was due to be launched in 2009. Israel's cooperation with France reflected a long-established policy of cooperating with other leading space-exploring nations. ISA had signed cooperation agreements with agencies in the United States, France, Canada, Germany, the Russian Federation, India, Ukraine and the Netherlands, and hoped to sign similar agreements with Chile, Brazil and the Republic of Korea. His Government believed that the new frontiers for human endeavour lay in outer space and it commended COPUOS on its efforts to use space technologies for improving quality of life on Earth.

12. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that it was particularly important to take regional and local capacities and needs into account in implementing the UNISPACE III recommendations. His delegation

believed that greater transparency and wider participation of countries in international cooperation for the peaceful uses of outer space were needed, and it welcomed the assistance provided by the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in that regard to developing countries and countries with economies in transition. He was concerned that the Programme's resources remained limited, however, and called on the donor community to continue to contribute to it. He thanked COPUOS for sponsoring the symposium on "Space and Archaeology" hosted in Damascus by the General Organization of Remote Sensing (GORS) and for its input into the activities of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications.

13. Given the importance of remote sensing technology for sustainable development, capacity-building with respect to such technology was crucial. His delegation therefore welcomed the West Asia and North Africa projects of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications. It also reiterated its emphasis on the dangers posed by space debris. Recent natural disasters had demonstrated the need for a global system for using space technology in disaster management. His delegation saw the Sentinel Asia project as an important initiative for improving early warning technology and disseminating it in a non-discriminatory fashion.

14. **Mr. Kazykhanov** (Kazakhstan) said that the fact that his country was home to the world-famous Baikonur space launch facility promoted its space cooperation with other countries. Its projects included the use of space science and technology for environmental protection and cooperation with the Russian Federation in the use of space and aviation technology and remote sensing of the Earth. His Government was working on a law on space activities and a State programme for the development of space activities up to 2020. In cooperation with their partners, Kazakh scientists had built the country's first national geostationary communications and rebroadcasting satellite, making it the second country in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to operate its own satellite in outer space. It was also operating a ground control complex and developing the necessary infrastructure for training national support staff. In 2008, it was scheduled to launch a second satellite and also to complete an ambitious space rocket complex. The Government was also considering a project to develop a space complex for launching smaller spacecraft for civilian applications. His delegation supported the conclusions in the COPUOS report regarding the need to use space technology for water management, early warning and management of emergencies and environmental monitoring.

15. **Mr. Siegel** (United States of America) noted that, in the past year, the COPUOS Scientific and Technical Subcommittee's Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space had made significant progress in identifying implementation options for establishing a framework for the safety of planned and foreseeable nuclear power source applications and that the Joint Technical Workshop on that subject, organized jointly with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had concluded its work successfully. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee's Working Group on Space Debris had also made significant progress and his delegation looked forward to the adoption at the Subcommittee's next session of its draft space debris mitigation guidelines, which were based on the Guidelines of the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC). His delegation also looked forward to the International Heliophysical Year 2007, which would focus attention on the importance of international cooperation in research activities in the field of solar-terrestrial physics.

16. His delegation understood that there was considerable support for the establishment of a United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER), but believed that it must be funded on the basis of voluntary contributions and not have an impact on the regular budget of the United Nations. The United States agencies responsible for disaster early warning and mitigation would not contribute resources to SPIDER, but their products would continue to be made available in disaster situations.

17. The COPUOS Legal Subcommittee's Working Group on the Practice of States and International Organizations Registering Space Objects had produced a promising preliminary report and the Legal Subcommittee's document on the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects had highlighted the benefits of adhering to the existing international legal framework governing outer space.

18. **Mr. Tarragô** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the States members and associate members of the Southern

Common Market (MERCOSUR), said that outer space must be considered the common heritage of humankind and be used rationally and peacefully for the collective benefit of current and future generations. Countries with greater space technology capacities, and the international community in general, must ensure universal access to its benefits.

19. Welcoming the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (A/61/20), he noted that COPUOS was responsible for ensuring that outer space continued to be used for peaceful purposes, taking particular account of the needs of developing countries. He welcomed the inclusion of the item "Space and water" on the COPUOS agenda and looked forward to the consideration of draft space debris mitigation guidelines at the forty-fourth session of the COPUOS Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

20. The recommendations of UNISPACE III must be implemented and international space law, including treaties relating to the peaceful practical applications of space science and technology, should be developed further. Accordingly, he welcomed the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Working Group of the Whole in connection with the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III, in particular those on promoting universal access to space communications services, the use of space technology for sustainable development, innovative funding mechanisms and the execution of experimental projects.

21. The United Nations Programme on Space Applications should focus on areas of priority for developing countries, ensuring local support for the use of space technology. It was essential to develop research for natural disaster prevention and he therefore supported the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) space programme and plans for increased international cooperation in using satellites and meteorology for climate monitoring. While MERCOSUR members and associate members would not oppose a United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER), they emphasized that it should not replace other international initiatives such as the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS).

22. He welcomed the identification of priority areas by COPUOS and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and, in particular, the inclusion of the item "International cooperation in promoting the use of space-derived geospatial data for sustainable development", designed to build developing countries' capacities in that area. Countries had a right to infrastructures for receiving, processing and using space-derived geospatial data and human resources training and increased international cooperation were fundamental for achieving that objective.

23. Turning to the report of the COPUOS Legal Subcommittee, he stressed the importance of enforcing and expanding on the existing international treaties relating to outer space. It was also important to create regional cooperation and coordination mechanisms and, in that regard, he welcomed the holding of the Fifth Space Conference of the Americas in Ecuador in June 2006. The Government of Guatemala would host the Sixth Space Conference of the Americas in 2009. He welcomed the establishment by the Government of Colombia of the Colombian Space Commission, which would advance geospace knowledge and technology in the region and their use in promoting sustainable development. Lastly, he noted that the next Chairman of COPUOS would be from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

24. **Mr. Ma** Xinmin (China) said that COPUOS should make its contribution to the development and improvement of the legal regime on the prevention of the militarization and weaponization of outer space and of an arms race in outer space. While independent innovation was important for advancing the peaceful uses of outer space, international cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit was also essential

25. After six years of discussions, the establishment of a United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER) was a practical step towards the implementation of the UNISPACE III recommendations. His Government supported the idea of placing SPIDER under OOSA and dividing its activities between offices in Beijing and Bonn. It would be providing free office premises, expert and support staff and part of the funding for the Beijing office. His Government also attached importance to space cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region and therefore welcomed the progress towards ratification of the Convention setting up the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO), which it hoped

would become another success story in regional cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

26. The year 2006 marked the fiftieth anniversary of China's aerospace industry, which had remained true to its principles of using space technology to broaden knowledge, promote social progress for the benefit of humankind, meet the needs of economic, scientific and technological development and serve the needs of national security. Under its eleventh five-year plan (2006-2010), China's priority was to transform its aerospace industry from serving business needs to developing and operating satellites in such areas as communications, navigation and remote sensing, as well as to engaging in cooperation in the application of space science and technology.

27. **Mr. Kumaran** (India) welcomed the progress achieved by COPUOS at its forty-ninth session. Developing countries were facing a number of challenges that could be met potentially if their capacities to use the results of space research for economic, social and cultural development were strengthened. The United Nations Programme on Space Applications played an important role in that regard. Since maximizing existing space capacities for disaster management was also important, he welcomed the establishment of a United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER), which would have to operate in conjunction with ground-based systems.

28. India's space programme was designed to provide for the country's socio-economic development. To that end, specific user-driven programmes had been undertaken in the areas of remote sensing, meteorology and communication satellite systems. The communication satellite INSAT-4A had been launched recently to meet the demand for direct satellite television broadcasting and tele-education, telemedicine and village resource centre (VRC) networks had been expanded. His Government also attached importance to the use of space-based systems for water and forest resources management and remote sensing data were being used to monitor surface water, irrigation, snow and glaciers and changes in forest cover, enabling conservation measures to be planned. Other major space application programmes included crop estimates and fisheries forecasting.

29. International cooperation, particularly South-South cooperation, was an important component of India's space programme. the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) provided expertise to developing countries in the application of space technology and India's Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for the Asia and Pacific Region conducted postgraduate and other courses benefiting scholars from many such countries. A connectivity mission had been launched between India and the countries of the African Union, providing for tele-education, telemedicine, e-governance, e-commerce, resource mapping and meteorological services and linking African and Indian hospitals and centres of learning. A pilot project had been implemented in Ethiopia, and it was planned to subsequently link Ghana and the Seychelles.

30. India had been an active member of COPUOS since its inception and had participated in a variety of global cooperation programmes. As a member agency of the International Charter "Space and Major Disasters", ISRO had contributed significantly to disaster response. The effective use of space applications was important for overall prosperity, and it was everyone's responsibility to maintain outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes. He therefore stressed the urgent importance of developing guidelines to regulate the unrestricted availability of high-resolution images of sensitive areas of all countries in the public domain, in particular on the Internet.

31. **Mr. Abiodun** (Nigeria) welcomed the significant progress made by COPUOS on a number of issues in 2006. Nigeria's National Space Research and Development Agency was a member agency of the International Charter "Space and Major Disasters" and the Government was organizing a number of national activities to mark the International Heliophysical Year 2007. In the context of regional cooperation, Nigeria was host to the African Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education-English (ARCSSTE-E) and in November 2005 had hosted the first African Leadership Conference on Space Science and Technology for Sustainable Development. South Africa and Algeria would be hosting the second and third such conferences in 2007 and 2009, respectively.

32. He welcomed the continuing work of COPUOS on space applications issues that were relevant to all countries, such as space and education, space and water and space and archaeology. He looked forward to the discussions on "Space and society" and "International

cooperation in promoting the use of space-derived geospatial data for sustainable development" to be held at the fiftieth session of COPUOS and to the Committee on Space Research/International Astronautical Federation (COSPAR/IAF) symposium on "The use of the equatorial orbit for space application: challenges and opportunities" that would take place during the forty-fourth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

33. Lastly, he called on COPUOS to address the issue of non-attendance by a number of its permanent members. Members States that continued to request their regional partners to support their membership, while failing, year after year, to attend COPUOS sessions, should be held accountable. Non-members, particularly those that attended regularly as observers, had a right to a response on that issue.

34. **Mr. Kryzhanivskyi** (Ukraine) said that his Government had implemented measures aimed at establishing cooperation to promote the peaceful uses of outer space. It also sought to promote and strengthen the scientific and engineering capacity of its domestic space industry. In that connection, Ukraine developed and produced space vehicles for peaceful purposes and belonged to the group of seven countries that launched their space launch vehicles regularly. In 2006, efforts had been focused on creating favourable conditions under international law for Ukrainian space sector businesses to participate in international space projects.

35. Ukraine recognized the global nature of the problem of man-made space debris and contributed actively to the efforts of the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC), of which its National Space Agency was a member. It paid particular attention to the mitigation of space debris and its spacecraft and spacelaunch vehicles were being modernized to take account of IADC recommendations in that regard.

36. The commercialization of outer space activities had weakened the regulatory function of international space law. With a view to building capacity in that area, his Government would host a workshop on "Status, applications and progressive development of international and national space law" in November 2006. It supported the drafting of a comprehensive convention on international space law.

37. **Ms. Lyubalina** (Russian Federation) said that, in view of the fact that COPUOS was the only body in a position to regulate peaceful activities in outer space at the global level, her delegation urged that its role in developing political and legal instruments for space activities should be enhanced. At the same time, its work and that of its Legal and Scientific and Technical Subcommittees, should be streamlined and made more efficient. Above all, COPUOS should take advantage of its unique position to undertake a comprehensive review of ways and means of ensuring that outer space was used only for peaceful purposes. Her delegation was concerned that there were still no guarantees against the launching of weapons into space. It was unacceptable that outer space should become an area of armed confrontation or an arms race.

38. She drew attention to a Russian proposal, which had received wide support, that the Committee should draft a comprehensive convention on international space law. Such a convention was long overdue.

39. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that outer space should remain clear of any object that posed a threat to humankind. He urged all States, particularly those with major space capabilities, to make every effort to prevent an arms race in outer space.

40. The growing gulf between developed and developing countries in their science and space technology capacities should be bridged by sharing information and by increasing international and regional cooperation. The Iranian Space Agency (ISA) had been established in February 2004 for that purpose and also to enable the country to benefit from space science and technology for peaceful purposes. The Agency, which came under the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, had started to play a significant role in enhancing international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region. In that connection, it had hosted a number of seminars and workshops. In May 2004, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (OOSA), it had organized a regional workshop on the use of space technology for environmental security, disaster rehabilitation and sustainable development. Participants from all over the world had decided to establish a regional task force for knowledge sharing, with ISA as its coordinator. The Agency had also organized, in cooperation with the Inter-Islamic Network on Space Sciences and Technology and with support from the Islamic Development Bank, an international seminar on satellite technology

applications in communications and remote sensing. In September 2005, the Eleventh Intergovernmental Consultative Committee Meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on the Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific had been held in Isfahan, while in November 2005, the Agency, in cooperation with OOSA and the World Health Organization, had held a seminar on telehealth, at which a network of medical, hygiene and disaster relief specialists, as well as space technology experts, had been established under the supervision of OOSA. Lastly, a seminar on space law was to be held in Tehran in the near future.

41. National projects and programmes had also been carried out or were planned, including studies of groundwater distribution, Persian Gulf pollution and surface-level changes in the Caspian Sea, a small multi-mission satellite project and the Zohreh and Mesbah satellite projects. The Islamic Republic of Iran was also one of the founding members of APSCO.

42. Space technologies could be particularly useful in the risk assessment, mitigation, preparedness and early warning phases of natural disasters management. In order to enable developing countries to use space technology-based solutions, it was imperative to increase awareness and build national capacity. Countries such as his own that were subject to severe natural disasters could benefit greatly by such technologies as early warning systems. Science and technology could also be useful in the efficient management of natural resources in general and water resources in particular. He therefore strongly supported the efforts of COPUOS to fund appropriate scientific solutions to existing water problems. In particular, his delegation supported the application of space science and technology to water management in arid and semi-arid lands, water pollution monitoring, monitoring of the environment of wetlands, mitigation of the effects of extreme water-related events and the scientific understanding of the water cycle.

43. His delegation supported the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III and favoured closer links between COPUOS and the Commission on Sustainable Development, which could contribute to the implementation of those recommendations. The action teams established by COPUOS members were also useful in that regard.

44. **Ms. Wülker-Mirbach** (Germany) said that disaster prevention and management were priorities for her delegation, which welcomed the COPUOS proposal to establish a United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER). Her Government felt that it could make a contribution by hosting a SPIDER office in Bonn. Access by all countries to the whole range of space-based information would provide disaster management support and facilitate capacity-building and institutional strengthening in developing countries. The Platform should receive wider support both in kind and in cash and should be funded from the regular budget of the United Nations. There was no reason why it should duplicate the work of GEOSS. On the contrary, the two programmes could cooperate.

45. **Mr. González** (Chile) said that, at the Fifth Space Conference of the Americas, the Latin American countries had made a crucially important decision to cooperate on gaining access to space technology, one of the benefits of which was its potential contribution to the eradication of poverty. The Conference had been well organized, but he had been disappointed by the lack of participation by one North American country — not the United States — which had sent no representative. United Nations participation had also been meagre, although the Government of Ecuador, which had hosted the Conference, had set aside a day for consultation with United Nations agencies before the Conference. The United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had attended the preparatory meeting, but not the Conference itself.

46. He commended the work of OOSA in developing United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER) and expressed his delegation's support for GEOSS.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/61/SR.9

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 9th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 13 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Acharya ..... (Nepal)
later: Ms. Bolaños Perez (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Guatemala)

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Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*)

Agenda item 30: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

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06-56989 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.4/61/L.5, submitted under item 39 on the Question of Western Sahara

1. **The Chairman** said that despite his best efforts to lead the parties to a consensus on the draft resolution, no consensus had been reached. He announced that Belize, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Nauru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Uruguay had become sponsors to the draft resolution.

2. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of its sponsors, said that the text was very similar to that of General Assembly resolution 60/114, and he hoped the Committee could adopt it without a vote.

3. **Mr. Sahel** (Morocco), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that his delegation had taken up negotiations with the delegation of Algeria in an effort to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution. It had made a number of proposals to Algeria's draft resolution, many of which had been rejected. After further consultations agreement had been reached, but the very next day his delegation had been surprised to learn that the Algerian delegation had made changes to the agreement. His delegation had submitted new proposals but they had been rejected. It was therefore Algeria which was responsible for forcing a vote on the draft resolution. By abstaining in the vote, members of the Committee would be reaffirming their conviction that the only way to reach a lasting mutually acceptable political solution to the dispute was through a consensual approach supporting the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy.

4. **Mr. Pereyra** (Peru) said that his delegation had historically supported a diplomatically negotiated, mutually acceptable political solution for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara and it would vote in favour of the draft resolution. However, its vote should not be viewed as reflecting its position in the Security Council, which continued to discuss the issue.

5. **Mr. Andereya** (Chile), expressed regret that no consensus had been achieved, adding that his delegation would support the draft resolution as the most recent compromise.

6. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) said that his delegation regretted that the Committee was being forced to vote on the draft resolution. He noted that the latter did not fully take into account the concerns of the Secretary-General or his Personal Envoy, in particular with regard to the need to continue the dialogue between the parties. Moreover, the tenth preambular paragraph referred to the settlement plan, which could not be implemented. Limiting parties to obsolete initiatives should be avoided. His delegation would therefore abstain.

7. **Ms. Lintonen** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, expressed deep regret at the fact that, despite its urgings to the two parties, it had not been possible to reach consensus on the draft resolution.

8. **Mr. Sow** (Guinea), said that his delegation regretted that no consensus had been reached and added that his delegation would abstain.

9. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Korea, Denmark, Dominica, Ecuador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Lao (People's Democratic Republic of), Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Malawi, Mauritius, Mexico, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Uganda, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Viet Nam, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

None.

Abstaining:

Andorra, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Brazil, Brunei Darussalem, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, France, Gabon, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Federated States of Micronesia, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Oman, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Thailand, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United States, Yemen.

10. *Draft resolution A/C.4/61/L.5 was adopted by 76 votes to none, with 72 abstentions.*

11. **Ms. Fawcett** (United Kingdom) said that her delegation regretted that it had not been possible to reach consensus and urged the parties to engage constructively with the United Nations process. Her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution, since the latter was very similar to the draft resolution adopted in 2005.

12. **Mr. Tarragô** (Brazil) expressed regret that it had proved impossible to reach consensus and said that his delegation had abstained. He urged the Secretary-General to renew his efforts to arrive at a mutually agreed solution.

13. **Mr. Cato** (Philippines) said that his delegation had hoped it would be possible to reach consensus and when that hope had proved vain it had opted to abstain.

14. **Ms. Bolaños Perez** (Guatemala) said her delegation regretted that no consensus had been achieved. It supported the peace plan for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara but noted that all parties should agree to the plan. While her delegation had opted to abstain, its vote should not be construed as indicating support for one side over the other, but as a reflection a desire to maintain a balance in the work of the United Nations.

15. **Mr. Naywin** (Myanmar) said that his delegation regretted that the draft resolution had had to be put to the vote. It strongly believed in the right of peoples to self-determination and had voted in favour of the draft resolution. He expressed the hope that the parties would continue to cooperate with the United Nations in pursuit of a just and lasting political solution.

16. **Mr. Sitnikov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation had contributed to the efforts to reach a consensus and regretted that no consensus had been achieved. It had voted in favour of the draft resolution because of its unchanging position of principle with respect to Western Sahara. There was no alternative to a just, lasting, mutually acceptable resolution, guided by the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy and based on Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

17. **Mr. Yamamoto** (Japan), while regretting that no consensus had been reached, said that the draft resolution could have been improved upon and his delegation had therefore abstained in the vote.

18. **Mr. Martins** (Portugal) said that his delegation regretted that it had not been possible to reach consensus. It had abstained because it deplored the fact that a vote had been necessary. Its abstention was not to be interpreted as support for one party over the other.

19. **Ms. Strōm** (Sweden) said that her delegation regretted that the resolution had not been adopted by consensus. It had voted in favour of the draft resolution but that did not mean that it had taken a side in the conflict.

20. **Mr. Spatafora** (Italy) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution because it was identical to the one that had been adopted in 2005. His delegation was particularly concerned by the effects of the lack of agreement on the civilian population and it called on all parties to renew their efforts to find an appropriate agreement.

21. **Mr. Palouš** (Czech Republic) said that his delegation regretted the lack of consensus and had abstained. However, that did not signify that it was taking a particular position.

22. **Ms. Papadopoulou** (Greece) said that the lack of consensus was regrettable. Her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution and it supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal

Envoy. Solutions could not be imposed; they required the full agreement of all parties concerned.

23. **Mr. Nazri** (Malaysia) expressed the hope that a peaceful, negotiated settlement could be found. His delegation did not favour either party and it had abstained.

24. **Mr. Kenes** (Belgium) said that his delegation regretted the lack of consensus and wished to assist in finding a peaceful solution to the dispute. It had voted in favour of the draft resolution in order to maintain its neutrality.

25. **Mr. McDonald** (Ireland) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution because the latter reaffirmed the right of the Saharan people to exercise their right to self-determination. He regretted the lack of consensus.

26. **Mr. Elsherbini** (Egypt) said that his delegation had abstained because of the lack of consensus. Cooperation, dialogue and a fair solution were needed to maintain good relations in the Maghreb.

27. **Ms. Kuvshynnykova** (Ukraine) said that a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations was required to allow the Saharan people to exercise their right to self-determination. Her delegation regretted the lack of consensus and believed that the parties could have made greater efforts to reach a consensus. It had abstained but that did not represent a particular position.

28. **Ms. Mladineo** (Croatia) said that the lack of consensus was regrettable. Her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution because the latter resembled the one that had been adopted by consensus at the previous session.

29. **Mr. Agha** (Slovakia) said that his delegation had believed that a consensus was possible and it had voted in favour of the draft resolution because that resolution contained the basic principle of self-determination. However, that did not mean that his Government had taken a particular position. It was committed to finding a negotiated settlement that took into account the views of the Saharan people.

30. **Ms. Laohaphan** (Thailand) said that his delegation had abstained because it had wanted the Committee to reach a consensus. It remained committed to supporting the role of the United Nations in finding a solution to the question of Western Sahara.

31. **Ms. Graham** (New Zealand) said that her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution. Her Government regretted the lack of consensus and believed that it was important to ensure that the Saharan people were aware of the international community's determination to allow them to exercise their right to self-determination.

32. **Mr. Wandel** (Denmark) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the resolution but that did not mean it was stating a particular position. His Government regretted the lack of consensus and believed that a mutually acceptable solution should be found by means of dialogue.

33. **Mr. Mana** (Cameroon) said that his delegation regretted the lack of consensus and had abstained.

34. **Mr. Bowman** (Canada) said that while his delegation had abstained that did not mean that it was expressing a particular position. His Government regretted that the parties had not made a greater effort to reach a consensus.

35. **Mr. Landemoen** (Norway), speaking also on behalf of Iceland, said that his Government regretted the lack of consensus. His delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution but in so doing had not meant to express a particular position.

36. **Ms. Peksa** (Poland) said that her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution but that did not mean that it had wished to indicate a particular position. It regretted the lack of consensus and believed that the only way to find a solution was for all parties concerned to engage in constructive dialogue.

37. **Mr. Panggabean** (Indonesia) expressed regret at the lack of consensus and reiterated that the only way to find a viable solution was through dialogue and international cooperation. His delegation had abstained but that should not necessarily be seen as reflecting a particular position.

38. **Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo** (Spain) said that the lack of consensus was particularly regrettable because it had been possible to reach agreement in 2005. His delegation had abstained because it had wanted to send a message that renewed effort and vision were required to find a mutually acceptable political solution.

39. **Ms. Tomic** (Slovenia) said that her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution because the latter had been based on the 2005 resolution, which had been adopted by consensus.

40. **Mr. Wegter** (Netherlands) said that the lack of consensus was regrettable and was not helpful. His delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution and had wished to maintain an impartial position. His Government called on all parties to make renewed efforts to find a solution.

41. **Ms. Román González** (Paraguay) said that her delegation had abstained but it still believed in the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 1540 (XV).

42. **Ms. Abraham Nagyi** (Hungary) said that her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution because the latter was based on the principle of self-determination; that did not mean that it was taking a particular position.

43. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria) said that it was regrettable that it had not been possible to adopt the draft resolution without a vote. Furthermore, it was regrettable that Morocco had not voted in favour of the draft resolution; in 2005 Morocco had voted in favour of a resolution that had been identical. The resolution just adopted represented a victory for the Saharan people in their struggle against the Moroccan occupation. It was particularly welcome given that the Saharan people were being harshly repressed by the occupying Moroccan forces. That was not generally known because press agencies and observers had been denied access to the Territory.

44. **Mr. Sahel** (Morocco) noted that, once again, Algeria had sought to divide the international community by insisting on a vote on the draft resolution, despite all the efforts made to achieve consensus. Algeria's stance showed the extent to which the issue was a bilateral and regional one. The result of the vote was by no means a "victory" for Algeria: as many countries had explained, their principle aim had been to encourage negotiations leading to a political solution acceptable to all parties. Algeria was in no position to lecture Morocco on morality, given that it had refused access by the Identification Commission to the camps in Tindouf. It was time for Algeria to see reason and recognize Morocco's right to its territorial integrity.

Agenda item 30: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*) (A/61/20 and Corr.1)

45. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) said that the importance of space-based disaster management had become abundantly clear in the wake of a series of natural disasters over recent years, including the devastating earthquake that had struck Pakistan in October 2005. Satellite remote sensing and a geographical information system (GIS) had been used for the speedy mapping of the stricken areas, thus assisting the rescue and relief operations. The establishment of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER) would take the process a step further.

46. The continued prosperity and welfare of nations hinged on the use of space technologies. It was therefore crucial to prevent an arms race in outer space. Insistence by States with major space capabilities on incorporating the use of outer space in their military doctrines put the security of all humanity at risk. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) had a role to play in that regard, alongside the Conference on Disarmament, and the two bodies should strengthen their working relationship and their channels of communication. His delegation supported the recent Canadian proposal to enhance the dialogue between the various bodies engaged in outer-space activities, including the Conference, COPUOS, the International Telecommunication Union and the General Assembly. Work should also commence on strengthening the international legal framework on activity in outer space. Further legal norms should be considered, on the basis of the work of COPUOS.

47. The projects undertaken by Pakistan using space sciences and technology included the gift of two transponders on Pakistan's communications satellite, Paksat-1, to the Virtual University. The Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) had initiated a very small aperture terminal (VSAT)-based telemedicine pilot project, using Paksat-1 transponder bandwidth, to provide health-care and telemedical facilities to people in rural areas. Satellite remote sensing data had been used for cotton crop estimation in a pilot project of the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, in collaboration with SUPARCO. Results had been encouraging and the project had been expanded to include the wheat crop. SUPARCO had also undertaken a number of

programmes relating to natural resource management, environmental surveying, satellite meteorology and atmospheric pollution monitoring. Recent projects included aquaculture development in coastal areas; assessment of mangrove forests along the coast; launch of vehicle-tracking and fleet-management services; baseline survey of flood-plain areas; and study of impact of global warming on water resources. The Government had also approved the launching of a communications satellite in 2009 and two remote sensing satellites.

48. *Ms. Bolaños-Perez (Guatemala), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

49. **Ms. Laohaphan** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that recent natural disasters had underscored the importance of space science and technology for disaster management and a better understanding of climate change. ASEAN members looked forward to further cooperation with United Nations agencies to enhance regional capacity in applying space science and technology to disaster management and sustainable development, with particular emphasis on tele-education and telemedicine, prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, conservation of the environment and protection of the cultural heritage. In Thailand, for example, the Distance Learning Foundation conducted live remote-education broadcasting via satellite throughout the country and to Thai communities around the world. ASEAN members also looked forward to cooperation with national and international space-related institutions in other regions.

50. ASEAN expressed its appreciation of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications for its initiatives in developing countries, including its sponsorship of a project to map tsunami-affected coastal aquaculture areas in Northern Sumatra using high-resolution satellite imagery. It also welcomed the new disaster-management initiative, the Sentinel-Asia project.

51. With US$ 10 million seed money contributed by the Thai Government, the Trust Fund on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia, administered by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, would help finance capacity-building in the network of national and regional centres with a view to transmitting tsunami warnings across the region in real time.

52. The ASEAN Subcommittee on Space Technology and Applications (SCOSA) had recently conducted a workshop on disaster mitigation using remote sensing and GIS. It had sent a mission to India which had identified various areas of collaboration. Other projects in the pipeline included one on the application of remote sensing to water resources management and one on capacity-building of educational institutions for enhanced promotion of space technology.

53. COPUOS was an important international forum, whose work should be harmonized with that of other international and regional forums, including the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities and the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development.

54. **Mr. Yamamoto** (Japan) said that Japan had launched H-IIA and M-V launch vehicles in February and September. The latter were among the best solid propellant launch vehicles in the world. Japan had also contributed an experiment module Kibo, for use by the International Space Station to conduct experiments and research in outer space. A Japanese astronaut had contributed significantly to the work of the mission of the space shuttle Discovery.

55. Recent achievements included the successful landing of the Hayabusa spacecraft on the asteroid Itokawa and the successful launching of the X-ray astronomy satellite Suzaku, the infrared astronomy satellite Akari and the solar physics satellite Hinode.

56. Japan cooperated closely with space organizations on various aspects of Earth observation. It also hosted the yearly meeting of the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum. At the twelfth session of the Forum, space and disaster management organizations in the Asia-Pacific region had agreed to collaborate; they had since launched the Sentinel-Asia project, which shared information on disasters. A total of 51 agencies from 18 countries and 7 international organizations, were already involved in the project. The theme of the thirteenth session of the Forum, to be held in Jakarta in December 2006, would be "Work together, building a secure and prosperous society".

57. Japan had recently put into orbit the advanced land observation satellite Daichi; the latter had already monitored a landslide on the island of Leyte in the

Philippines, the eruption of the volcano Merapi and an earthquake in Java and flooding in northern Thailand.

58. Japan continued to work for the implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) and had developed its own space debris mitigation standard, which had been presented to the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee.

59. **Mr. Abdalhaleem** (Sudan) said the applications of space technology had strengthened the ability of mankind to deal with threats to human life and to attain development goals. Like other developing countries, Sudan looked to benefit from such advanced technology in the areas of sustainable development, disaster prevention and rapid response to emergencies. His delegation hailed the efforts of COPUOS to implement the recommendations of the UNISPACE III and commended the study presented by the ad hoc expert group on the creation of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (SPIDER). SPIDER should be linked directly to the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UN-OOSA) and should work towards increasing the disaster management capacities of relevant agencies, particularly in developing countries. His Government was concerned at the devastating consequences of natural disasters and was prepared to do its utmost to support international efforts to minimize their impact.

60. Sudan supported the Committee's recommendations for greater transparency in the space activities being undertaken by various States. It was imperative to ensure that outer space was used for peaceful purposes only. Work also should continue on finding a voluntary solution to the problem of space debris as well as on legislation aimed at mitigating such debris.

61. **Mr. Bahk** (Republic of Korea) said that space science and technology was playing a greater role in daily life than ever before. Greater access to space-based services was needed in order to enhance coordination and cooperation for disaster management and emergency response. His country welcomed the proposal of COPUOS to establish the SPIDER platform.

62. Since 1999, the Republic of Korea had launched two of its own satellites and was planning to launch another three by 2009. Those satellites would be used to carry out environmental, agricultural and oceanic monitoring as well as to preserve marine resources around the Korean Peninsula and across East Asia. In addition to those technological developments, efforts to establish an institutional environment conducive to technological development had continued. With the enactment in November 2005 of the National Space Law, the Republic of Korea would be better able to implement United Nations outer space treaties and coordinate and promote the outer space activities of both governmental and non-governmental entities.

63. **Mr. Goldnick** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said outer space should be decreed as part of the common heritage of mankind so as to prevent its use from being restricted to a few countries which would obtain unilateral benefits from its use. It was important to promote a legal instrument for the establishment of an international regime that would assure equal access to the scientific and technological benefits derived from the peaceful use of outer space. The United Nations and COPUOS both had a fundamental role to play in the achievement of those goals.

64. Geostationary orbit should be regarded as a limited natural resource and should therefore be used on the basis of the principle of rational and equitable access for all countries, bearing in mind the needs and interests of developing countries. Venezuela strictly upheld principles that fostered the peaceful use of outer space. In that regard it had concluded a cooperation agreement with the People's Republic of China on the peaceful use of outer space which provided for Venezuela's acquisition of the Simón Bolívar satellite and the establishment of a space centre. A draft law which would provide for the establishment and operation of the Bolivarian Space Agency had just received a second reading in the Venezuelan National Assembly. Those developments illustrated the importance that Venezuela attached to the use of outer space for peace, unity and development.

65. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica) said his country fully supported the work of COPUOS as it strived to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE III. The Committee was an important forum for the exchange of ideas on international collaboration in space science and technology for improving the welfare of mankind. The recommendation of the General Assembly that avenues be explored for the use

of space technology in implementation of the recommendations of the World Summit on Sustainable Development testified to the link between the benefits derived from the use of space technology, on the one hand, and economic growth and sustainable development, particularly in developing countries, on the other.

66. Outer space should never be used for military purposes. His delegation called for the creation of effective mechanisms to prevent any such development and endorsed the recommendation for greater transparency in the space activities being undertaken by various States.

67. It noted with keen interest the emphasis that had been placed on disaster management, particularly the establishment of the SPIDER platform. His country was all too familiar with the devastating impact of hurricanes and would closely follow the work of the Committee on the application of space technology in the area of disaster management. Other potential benefits of space technology to developing countries ranged from tele-education and telemedicine to management of water resources and the improvement of public health services.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/61/SR.10

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Summary record of the 10th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 16 October 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Achary ..... (Nepal)
later: Mr. Andersson (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Sweden)

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06-57281 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Election of a Vice-Chairman

1. **The Chairman** said that, as Mr. Djacta (Algeria) was unable to complete his term as Vice-Chairman, Mr. Djeffal (Algeria) had been nominated by the African Group to replace him.

2. *Mr. Djeffal (Algeria) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.*

Agenda item 34: Questions relating to information (A/61/21, A/61/21/Add.1 and A/61/216)

3. **The Chairman** drew attention to the report of the Committee on Information (A/61/21 and Add.1).

4. **Mr. Tharoor** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), introducing the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/216), said that while support for the United Nations had significantly faltered in some areas, the vast majority of people sought a United Nations that was stronger. Countries which once felt insulated from danger realized that security depended on cooperative, international efforts, and that the role of the United Nations was still valid. The aim of reform was to close the gap between what the people wanted from the United Nations and what the Organization was capable of delivering. One of the challenges in the reform process was in the area of public information.

5. One of the first steps towards reform had been for the Department of Public Information (DPI) to clearly define its mission to communicate the activities and concerns of the Organization for the greatest public impact. Guided by four objectives for greater effectiveness through targeted delivery, the enhanced use of information and communication technologies, the expansion of its grass-roots support base through partnerships with civil society and assessing activities through the annual programme impact review (APIR), DPI had introduced a new operating model and organizational structure. The strategic approach was to set priorities in relation to the overall substantive purposes of the United Nations in order to do what was most pressing, achievable and measurable. Three sets of collaborators supported DPI headquarters staff in gaining maximum media exposure, including United Nations information centres and services, the United Nations Communications Group (UNCG) and a network of over 1,500 civil society organizations.

6. The new operating model ensured greater internal coordination and a new client consultation process. Secretariat departments and United Nations system organizations were clients and DPI was the service provider. Clients generated the raw material of public information and worked with DPI to identify key messages. DPI recast the material for target audiences and promoted it globally. That approach enabled DPI to tailor its products and services to the needs of the Organization. Client consultations had also given greater visibility to United Nations priority issues.

7. DPI had also introduced the rapid media response mechanism to respond clearly and effectively for a proper understanding of the United Nations in view of external events that could impact quickly on the image of the Organization. The mechanism included regular briefing guidance on priority issues for officials who spoke to the media, a coordinating mechanism for the placement of op-ed articles and daily meetings with the Office of the Secretary-General.

8. In an effort to ensure that the United Nations system spoke with one voice on issues of common interest, UNCG had been formed as a communications platform. The entire United Nations system was now within UNCG; the latter had been so successful at the global level that local UNCGs were created in 2005. Now most countries with a United Nations information centre (UNIC) had a local UNCG. To enhance working together, UNifeed was launched in 2005 as an inter-agency satellite news service offering field video six days a week to a network of over 560 broadcasters. UNifeed covered the work of the entire United Nations system and its cost was nominal compared to the outreach achieved.

9. The role of field offices was being re-evaluated. UNICs in major media hubs had been given a greater regional coordination role, and the entire network of UNICs had been connected to iSeek. UNICs had also been integrated into the Strategic Communications (StratCom) system, an internal Internet communications network which provided information on DPI's priorities and an interactive forum for UNICs to brainstorm and share best practices. All UNICs could also now integrate their activities into the communications efforts of their local United Nations system partners.

10. New information and communication technologies had been key to DPI's drive for improved productivity. In particular, the Internet had emerged as a central element. The level of resources allocated to the development of the United Nations website had gradually increased over the years. Allowing the public to access the Official Documents System (ODS) had resulted in an exponential increase in the number of documents available to Internet users in all official languages, and in a much more multilingual United Nations website. Website usage had almost doubled since 2002. Converting news-related products and service to database-driven applications had yielded results, including increased productivity. Technology had allowed other departments to update their web pages using DPI news feeds. The database-driven e-mail news service had over 44,000 subscribers and had received high marks from its users in a recent survey. The Internet had also contributed to radio and video operations improvements. Webcasting had increased greatly since 1998 and had been extended to Geneva and conferences away from Headquarters. Many radio broadcasters received UN Radio programmes via the Internet and DPI would soon distribute broadcast-quality video and high resolution photos on the Internet.

11. Technology had also helped to expand outreach to civil society. Annual observances of World Environment Day, the International Day of Peace and Human Rights Day included multimedia dialogue and interaction through video links at a number of locations. Partnerships with civil society organizations allowed for the electronic submission of briefings papers by experts and webcasts of briefings for important outreach and information programmes such as the "Holocaust and the United Nations" and "Rwanda, genocide and the UN". DPI was proud of its relationships with non-governmental organizations and academic institutions in Africa. The Academic Initiative Section had been created to strengthen DPI links to academia and its *UN Chronicle* boasted 46,000 visits per month. DPI had also sought new and innovative ways to partner with the private sector and connect with new audiences, such as teaming up with MTV to promote public awareness in non-traditional viewing platforms.

12. Radical changes had been introduced in DPI's library services. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library and Knowledge Sharing Centre (DHLink) was spearheading an effort to help United Nations libraries develop networks of knowledge-sharing communities. The entire focus of library work was now oriented towards making connections for its users. DHLink had also spearheaded the redesign of the United Nations intranet (iSeek) and had expanded its outreach activities, in particular by reinforcing its support and training for depository libraries.

13. Finally, a new evaluation tool had been introduced and integrated into all aspects of the Department's work. The "annual programme impact review" (APIR) set clearly measurable indicators of achievement for the Department's major activities, allowing managers to determine the effectiveness of their activities. When surveys had shown that "World Chronicle", one of the Department's two major television programmes, had a very small audience, DPI had halted production of the programme. Other surveys had confirmed that DPI met the needs of its audiences the vast majority of the time and that there had been a truly astonishing growth in global access to United Nations public information products and services.

14. Expanded use of new communications technologies had allowed DPI to reinforce its culture of self-evaluation. Web- and video-tracking software was being used to monitor usage of material and regular person-to-person contact was employed to gauge user satisfaction with radio and video programmes.

15. Finally, he said that while many major objectives had been achieved, reform was a process not an event. The reform process of the past five years had laid down the foundation for success.

16. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would now hold an interactive dialogue on the agenda item and then proceed to the general debate. He invited members to put questions to the Under-Secretary-General.

17. **Mr. Ali** (Sudan) said that further clarification was needed on paragraph 14 of the report regarding plans for a United Nations peacekeeping mission in Darfur. His Government was not aware of any such mission to Darfur and had made its position clear on that subject.

18. **Ms. Yan** Jiarong (China) said that the work of DPI had made a significant contribution to strengthening the capacities of the United Nations. In relation to paragraph 6 of the report, further information should be provided on the number of

articles and interviews that had been published in 2006. In addition, it would be useful to know how DPI had approached newspapers to publish those articles. Given the problems that had arisen in connection with the cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad, it would be interesting to learn about the DPI programme of work to promote dialogue between different religions and cultures.

19. **Ms. Zakharova** (Russian Federation), noting that DPI had made significant progress, requested further clarification should be provided on the future direction of its programme of work.

20. **Mr. Suárez Salvia** (Argentina), noting that many delegations shared a passion for promoting multilingualism in the work of the United Nations, asked whether DPI had any plans to promote multilingualism. The responsibility for doing so should be shared by all United Nations bodies and by all member States.

21. **Mr. Tharoor** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), replying to the representative of the Sudan, said that the Security Council had authorized a peacekeeping mission to Darfur, subject to the approval of the Government of Sudan. Since public information was an essential component of mission planning, DPI had made initial plans for a possible future mission to Darfur. However, those plans had been drafted to ensure that DPI was prepared in the event that the Government of Sudan gave its permission for such a mission.

22. Regarding the question put by the representative of China, he said that, in 2006, four op-ed articles by the Secretary-General had been published by approximately 40 newspapers in 20 to 30 countries. An average of one or two op-ed articles had been published by senior officials and had received a similar level of coverage. DPI maintained a list of contacts that were approached when an article was ready for dissemination and it tried to give preference to those newspapers that were in a position to publish the same article in different languages. In connection with the cartoons that had depicted the prophet Muhammad, DPI had tried to focus on the broader context of promoting a dialogue among civilizations by means of seminars and op-ed articles. The Educational Outreach Section in the DPI Outreach Division had organized a series of seminars entitled "Unlearning Intolerance" that were aimed at bringing people of different cultures together.

23. With regard to the question put by the representative of the Russian Federation, he said that the main objectives and road map of DPI had been presented in the report and a Strategic Framework for 2008-2009 had been reviewed by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC).

24. Finally, while agreeing with the representative of Argentina on the importance of multilingualism, he said that it was the responsibility of the substantive departments to ensure that their material was translated into the official languages for use in reports, public information broadcasts and websites.

25. **Mr. Najafi** (Islamic Republic of Iran), noting that the Journalists' Fellowship Programme had accepted 360 journalists since 1981, which amounted to 12 to 15 journalists per year, asked whether it would be possible to increase that number and to take more journalists from the developing countries.

26. **Mr. Tharoor** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) replied that while it would be useful to increase the number of journalists admitted to the programme, doing so would require increased funding and that required a decision by the General Assembly. The number of journalists admitted to that programme had, in fact, decreased in recent years because the costs of training each journalist had increased whereas funding levels had not.

27. **The Chairman** thanked the Under-Secretary-General and said that the Committee would now proceed to the general debate on the item.

28. **Mr. Gidor** (Israel) expressed satisfaction with the Department's professional standards and vocational commitment. DPI had to convince an increasingly cynical public of the sincerity of the efforts of the United Nations as it struggled to be heard alongside competing narratives.

29. Noting that the role of the United Nations in the Middle East had been more pivotal than ever before during the past year, he said Israel was an ideal location for dissemination of the vision of the United Nations. He therefore invited DPI to open an Information Centre in Israel.

30. He commended DPI and Under-Secretary-General Tharoor for their efforts to promote Holocaust remembrance around the world, adding that he had been touched by the creative ways in which General Assembly resolution 60/7 was being implemented. Promoting awareness of the Holocaust was designed to promote global understanding and mutual tolerance.

31. Israel was disappointed that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was the only conflict that still had a special information programme and, moreover, one which — by the very definition of its mandate — conveyed a one-sided picture. That seemed rather wasteful, at a time when there were no funds to tell other, more globally relevant stories.

32. Israel was made up of immigrants from more than 160 nations and had been grappling for years with many of the issues raised in the Committee. It would like to share some of its experiences, particularly with regard to the issue of bridging the technological and digital divide. After citing various statistics that attested to its credentials on the subject, he said that his country was eager to share that experience with other nations in the region in order to further the common good.

33. **Mr. Alzaabi** (United Arab Emirates) said the world had become increasingly aware of the importance of digital technology as a means of disseminating information and in bringing people together. While such technology had had positive effects, it had also created new problems, most notably by widening the economic and social gap between North and South. Accordingly, the international community should agree on a new, more just international system for information that would regulate and develop existing media and digital communications technologies in order to ensure a freer, wider and more balanced flow of information.

34. His country was fully convinced that achievement of the Millennium Development Goals would require providing financial, educational and technical resources to developing countries so they might gain access to modern information technologies that were suited to their needs. If that were achieved, it would noticeably reduce human suffering in the least developed countries.

35. His delegation was extremely concerned by the Western media's deliberate disregarding of the third world's concerns as well as its continued attempts to distort the historical, cultural and religious realities of the Muslim and Arab peoples. It was incumbent upon Western countries and their media to review their biased policies and practices in that regard. It was also necessary to devise a global media and communications strategy that was based on transparency on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It was more important now than ever before for the United Nations to make good use of the media. In that regard, his delegation highly appreciated the efforts of DPI in disseminating the noble mission of the Organization and called for the further expansion of DPI programmes.

36. Finally, he expressed concern that Arabic was not being given equal treatment and called upon DPI to rectify the situation. He also called for greater cooperation between DPI and the programmes and agencies of the United Nations and for the strengthening of DPI activities aimed at disseminating information on the question of Palestine, developments in the Middle East and the suffering of the Palestinian people.

37. **Mr. Andersson** (Sweden, Vice-Chairperson) took the Chair.

38. **Ms. Nuñez Mordoche** (Cuba) observed that the communication and information gap between the developed and the developing countries was widening, with the preponderance of Internet, telephone and cellphone users to be found in a handful of the developed nations. Without a true democratization of access to technological development, bolstered by substantial financial resources facilitated by the United Nations, the predicted global "information society" would remain an impossibility for most. Through its valuable information centres, the United Nations must also see to a just and balanced spread of information. Also, in order to reach the large illiterate populations in the countries of the South, the United Nations should rely on media such as the radio.

39. Under blockade and lacking resources, Cuba had given priority to the collective use of information and communication technologies: it had ensured the televised teaching of computer skills in the schools from the earliest age, brought university courses to all towns through computers and audio-visual media, established a network of community facilities that taught computer skills. It had also developed a revolutionary media-based literacy programme for use

at home and abroad, which had lifted over a million people out of ignorance in more than 10 countries, and provided the services of Cuban doctors in remote areas in more than 60 countries, who worked with the aid of computerized information and taught others to do so.

40. Once again, Cuba found it necessary to denounce the aggression, via radio and television, which the United States Government had been directing for decades against the Cuban revolution. Recently, the Office of Cuba Broadcasting had begun using aircraft to expand its television broadcasting. In 2006, $37 million had been appropriated for the anti-Cuban propaganda broadcasts on Radio and TV Martí, a blatant new violation of international law and of the Charter of the United Nations. Over 300 hours a day of biased information and incitement for the overthrow of the constitutional order established by the Cuban people were broadcast from United States-based stations, some operated directly by the Government and some linked to well-known terrorists protected by it. While Cuba would, as always, neutralize the latest aggression against its sovereignty and independence, it had the right to denounce such illegal action and demand its cessation.

41. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Rio Group, observed that it was the task of the Department of Public Information, as the public voice of the United Nations, to provide clear, unbiased, and timely reports on the work of the Organization. The reorientation of the Department had allowed it to enhance its work and increase the visibility of the Organization through updated work methods and activities and an effective utilization of its resources. The Department had wisely decided to address some of the key issues of global concern, including HIV/AIDS, natural disasters, human development, threats to international peace and security, eradication of hunger and poverty and the United Nations reform, with attention to the newly created Human Rights Council and Peacebuilding Commission.

42. The close cooperation between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and DPI was commendable and should be expanded to ensure the best support for vital peacekeeping operations. The Department should be aware that, even though the new information and communication technology was readily available in the developed world, the traditional means of communication like radio and the print media were to many in the developing world still the only means of obtaining information. It should therefore expand its links with national broadcasters and journalists in order to reach a worldwide audience.

43. The United Nations Library had done well to expand its knowledge-sharing role and internal communication within the Secretariat and to focus on expanding the outreach capacity of depository libraries.

44. The importance of multilingualism as a means of transmitting the United Nations message to different regions of the world needed to be underscored. The Rio Group welcomed the efforts made to increase the quality and range of material available on the United Nations website in all the official languages; that should remain a priority. Consideration should also be given to the transmission of information in languages other than the six official ones. It was also very important that the main pages of the website had been revised to ensure its accessibility for persons with disabilities. The Department of Public Information should continue to be reinforced.

45. **Ms. Kanerva** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia; and, in addition, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Norway and Ukraine, observed that informing the peoples of the world about the United Nations and its goals and activities at a time when the United Nations reform was under way was a task of huge importance. DPI played a crucial role in providing accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information about the United Nations, and the European Union fully supported it. The Department should be commended for its commitment to pursuing genuine reform and reorienting its activities so as to further rationalize and optimize them and enhance their visibility and impact.

46. The Secretary-General's ambitious plan for the creation of regional United Nations information centres could deliver real benefits and had the full support of the European Union. Regionalization should, of course, be conducted with care and reflect the specific situation of those countries that still had information centres.

47. The European Union supported the Department's mission statement, which focused on United Nations

priorities such as poverty reduction, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, HIV/AIDS, combating terrorism, and the needs of the African continent. However, those objectives could be achieved only if people were aware of the issues and the links between development, security, human rights and the rule of law. By using both traditional and new communication tools, the Department showed its commitment to people in both developed and developing countries. All needed to work together to narrow the technology gap between them.

48. The Department was taking a more strategic approach to promoting global awareness of the United Nations and had identified strategic objectives that would maximize the impact of its work: pursuing well-defined and targeted delivery of information, taking advantage of new developments in information and communication technologies, and building partnerships with civil society.

49. There had been further development of the content and design of the United Nations website, now a primary source of information on the Organization, and welcome efforts to make it accessible for persons with disabilities. The Internet being a global communication tool, it was also imperative to make full use of the United Nations linguistic diversity, moving towards parity among the official languages on the website and continuing to favour multilingualism in all activities.

50. The European Union held that freedom of the press was of pivotal importance to all societies and a crucial element in building democracy. It thus strongly condemned all attempts to control or influence the media and would like to pay its respects to all those journalists — 75 of whom had been killed in the current year alone — who had lost their lives while performing their duties.

51. **Mr. Dozenko** (Ukraine) said that his Government encouraged the efforts of DPI to meet the demands of the contemporary information society. The Department's mission statement rightly focused on key priorities that echoed the Millennium Declaration, and such objectives could be achieved only if the public was aware that development, security, human rights, justice and the rule of law were interlinked. Ukraine welcomed the Department's efforts to draw the world's attention to the activities of the new Human Rights Council as that body faced new challenges.

52. As one of the troop-contributing countries, Ukraine appreciated the growing partnership between DPI and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in raising world awareness about peacekeeping. In jointly planning, staffing and supporting the public information components of the new, expanded peacekeeping missions, they were working together to effectively publicize such United Nations success stories.

53. Ukraine also welcomed the Department's efforts to raise awareness of the lessons of the Holocaust and of the dangers of hatred, racism and prejudice. The Ukrainian people had themselves been victims of genocide for the Great Famine of 1932-1933, which had been deliberately organized by the Communist regime, had killed 25 per cent of the population. Ukraine called upon the United Nations to recognize the Great Famine as an act of genocide, a step that would help make genocide and mass abuse of human rights less possible in the future.

The meeting rose at 5.15

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 17 October 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Acharya ..... (Nepal)

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Agenda item 34: Questions relating to information (*continued*)

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06-57436 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 34: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/61/21 and Add.1 and A/61/216)

1. **Mr. Muhith** (Bangladesh), speaking as Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced its report on its twenty-eighth session (A/61/21 and Add.1) and drew attention to the first two chapters, noting that with the appointment of Austria, the Committee now had a total of 108 members.

2. Chapter III gave a summary of the general debate, during which the Committee had had before it five relevant reports of the Secretary-General and five reports by the Department of Public Information (DPI). Of the 32 members and the one observer who had spoken, most had emphasized the central role of the United Nations in global affairs and of the Department as its public voice, a number of them commenting on the Department's role in peacekeeping operations and the strides it must make to bridge the digital divide between developed and developing countries. The United Nations website had been cited as an important source of information, but concerns had been expressed at the continuing disparity in treatment among the different official languages, which the Department should seek to remedy. Given the importance of traditional means of communication, the Department had been encouraged to continue building partnerships with local, national and regional radio broadcasters. Several speakers had also underlined the importance of promoting a dialogue among civilizations. Others had stressed the value of the presence of United Nations information centres in developing countries to improve the flow and quality of information, although the representative of one regional group had expressed dissatisfaction with the pace of the regionalization of the information centres in his area. Other speakers had welcomed the new strategic orientation of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

3. Chapter IV of the report presented two draft resolutions, the first — identical to that of the previous year — on information in the service of humanity and the second on United Nations public information policies and activities, as well as one draft decision increasing the membership of the Committee.

4. In a resumed session in August 2006, the Committee on Information had taken note of the strategic framework of the Department of Public Information for the biennium 2008-2009 and had forwarded it to the Committee for Programme and Coordination for review.

5. **Mr. Mammadov** (Azerbaijan) observed that reliable information, served to consolidate liberal principles such as pluralism, transparency and accountability, and hence free and easy access to public information and the dissemination of information were imperatives.

6. In its four-year process of reorientation, the Department of Public Information had steadily moved to implement the four strategic objectives set for it: the targeted delivery of public information, the enhanced use of the new information and communication technologies, increased partnership with civil society, and the integration of a culture of evaluation at all levels of work.

7. There was insufficient coverage of the Organization in the media, and the Department must act not only as the focal point for information policies but also as the primary news centre for the United Nations, and it must deliver timely, accurate, objective and non-biased news and information. In several cases, however, news digests and press releases had been unbalanced and inaccurate. It was very important for DPI personnel to maintain editorial independence, impartiality and accuracy.

8. In redirecting its activities, the Department should work in areas of special concern to developing countries and countries in transition, so as to close the information and communication gap between the developing and developed countries. Bridging the digital divide especially would allow the United Nations to address various socio-economic issues, such as the elimination of poverty, the promotion of development and the improvement of public health and educational systems.

9. The United Nations information centres should continue to disseminate information that would raise awareness of United Nations activities; in that regard, language remained an important factor in reaching local populations. The information centres should also continue their outreach to educational institutions and civil society.

10. **Ms. Zakharova** (Russian Federation) commended DPI for focusing attention on one of the key outcomes of the 2005 World Summit, the

establishment of the Human Rights Council, a topic that had been extensively covered in the Russian print and electronic media.

11. The growing cooperation of the media with Governments in counteracting terrorism was also a matter of great importance and should reflect the terms of Security Council resolution 1624 (2005) in order to avoid double standards. In June 2006, in cooperation with DPI, the Russian Federation had hosted the 14th international media seminar on peace in the Middle East, which had allowed representatives of Israel and Palestine and other involved States to communicate informally with world journalists, thus promoting objective coverage of events in that region.

12. The Department had done commendable work in covering the United Nations Small Arms Review Conference, as well as migration and development issues and the New Partnership for Africa's Development. It should continue to cooperate with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on a systematic and comprehensive communications strategy in support of peacekeeping operations, especially, the deployment in Lebanon.

13. The network of United Nations information centres should be further rationalized, and the same approach should be taken to all of them on budgetary, personnel and other issues. Information centres should not only deliver timely information on United Nations activities to the local media but also act as a link between the Organization and the civil society of a country. The Moscow information centre had been conducting conferences on various issues and organizing exhibits and round tables, while working in close cooperation with Russian non-governmental organizations and civil society.

14. The principle of multilingualism and the equality of all official United Nations languages should be reflected, in practice, in the provided news materials. The Department had indeed made steps towards language parity on the United Nations website. The Russian website, news centre and radio service had, for instance, been operating quite successfully.

15. The new strategy for the Library had allowed it to improve the exchange of knowledge and the links within the Secretariat, and its facilities for readers had also been enhanced, especially by the introduction of digital information.

16. It was well known that journalists, in defending freedom of speech and searching for reliable news, risked great dangers. His delegation felt particular pain over the cruel murder the previous week of the prominent Russian journalist, Anna Politkovskaya, and was grateful for all expressions of sympathy.

17. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that her delegation had been pleased to learn, from the Secretary-General's report (A/61/216), that the Department had revised the main pages of its website to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities.

18. The Department had done notable work to promote visibility of the Organization and to publicize key issues or events, such as international migration or the Small Arms Review Conference. Also, its collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) was essential to guaranteeing a flow of accurate information to troop-contributing countries. Timely and balanced coverage of facts and events within the United Nations system and in its Member States would restore and maintain the Organization's credibility.

19. The efficacy of the newly created regional group for Latin America and the Caribbean remained to be assessed; the particular characteristics of each country within a geographical area should not be forgotten, even while striving for greater consistency among the messages put out by the various United Nations country teams. All the activities of the Department and the United Nations information centres would benefit from adequate cooperation with the host Governments. The database to be established by DPI allowing access to all information centre workplans should prove useful. The information centre in Colombia processed a great volume of information because of the large United Nations presence there and should be strengthened. The centres generally were tools to help the world see not only the services and benefits of the United Nations but also the achievements made by the countries themselves.

20. Lastly, Colombia supported the proposed expansion of the membership of the Committee on Information.

21. **Ms. Miyoshi** (Japan) welcomed the initiative taken by DPI to accomplish reform and noted that the Department's annual conference for non-governmental organizations which had been held the previous month to discuss effective partnerships for human security

and sustainable development had been an important occasion to determine how the United Nations, Member States and international organizations could work together with non-governmental organizations in tackling many world issues.

22. The United Nations information centre in Tokyo — the only organization in the United Nations that disseminated information on the Organization in the Japanese language and, as such, receiving considerable support from her Government — had sought to deepen the Japanese people's understanding of the huge tasks the United Nations was expected to fulfil. The information centre would be in close communication with DPI with regard to the effectiveness of its own public relations activities. Japan hoped that adequate efforts would be made to publicize the importance of the relations between the United Nations and the various developed countries, because criticism was often heard by elected officials and the public in those countries concerning the high cost of supporting the United Nations.

23. Japan believed that Member States should reconsider the way that meetings of the Committee on Information were held and the relationship between that Committee and the Fourth Committee in order to find more efficient ways of conducting consultations.

24. **Mr. Jha** (India) welcomed the four strategic objectives outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/216) and news that programming on the UN Radio website was available inter alia in Hindi, Bengali and Urdu. As the gap in the technological capabilities between developed and developing countries was still broad, DPI must intensify its efforts to meet the needs of developing countries by combining traditional and new communications technologies. United Nations information centres (UNICs) must be assigned adequate resources and DPI should consult with host countries and other countries served by the centres in order to properly consider the geographical, linguistic and technological characteristics of the various regions.

25. DPI and DPKO should continue to work together and highlight DPKO success stories. DPI should be involved in the dissemination of information about DPKO missions from the beginning stages in order to create a better image for the United Nations and its peacekeepers worldwide.

26. The progress made in the development of the United Nations website was impressive, in particular improvements to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. Still, local language websites must remain a priority. He urged DPI to strengthen its efforts to collaborate with academia and civil society organizations, and noted that it had been the first United Nations department to implement an annual programme impact review for self-evaluation.

27. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan) said that the role of DPI had assumed a greater dimension owing to polarizations and misunderstandings between societies and cultures. The United Nations was addressing those issues and it was vital for DPI to publicize the aspirations and resolve of the international community, as expressed in various decisions, in order to maximize their effect.

28. Pakistan attached high priority to the work of United Nations information centres. Those centres served as "mini-United Nations" and helped enhance the interest and involvement of local populations in the work of the Organization.

29. Noting the vast disparities that existed in the flow of information between the developed and the developing countries, he said that it was imperative to strengthen the information and communication infrastructures of the developing countries so that they could disseminate information about their societies to the rest of the world. The media of the developed world, with resources greater than the budgets of many countries, dominated the flow of information. Such an imbalanced flow of information jeopardized understanding and goodwill between societies, regions and cultures. Information should be used to bring peoples closer together instead of placing a wedge between them. That objective could be achieved — provided there was the necessary political will — by strengthening the information and communications infrastructure of the developing world. That task could be accomplished by the International Programme for the Development of Communications (IPDC) of UNESCO. That programme was mandated by the General Assembly every year; the Committee should receive a report from UNESCO in that regard.

30. DPI could best fulfil its mandate by utilizing such things as press releases which could reach a very wide audience. The press releases provided by the News and Media Division were vital to the dissemination of information about the United Nations system. The

Division needed to be strengthened in order to enhance its viability. His delegation also attached great importance to radio. The Urdu language broadcasts by the United Nations Radio were useful to people in his part of the world.

31. Finally, he said that the role played by the News and Media Division and the Radio and Television Service in support of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) deserved to be acknowledged and he asked DPI to assure equitable access for journalists from developing countries to the Secretary-General for interviews.

32. **Mr. Alberto** (Angola) welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/216) and the efforts of DPI to open an information centre in Luanda to serve five developing countries. He reiterated his Government's offer to provide premises free of charge as evidence of its commitment to the enhanced dissemination of information, particularly in Africa. There was a clear need to develop different media for different audiences. Developing countries did not have the same news media technology as developed countries and, in that connection, an information centre in Luanda would serve the special needs of its target audience well.

33. He welcomed the work of UN Radio, in particular in Africa, and commended DPI on the redesign of and additions to the United Nations website. He called on DPI, together with other United Nations departments, to consider allocating special passes for counsellors and attachés of permanent missions so that they could more effectively conduct their business during the General Assembly.

34. **Mr. Maqungo** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, commended DPI on its communications campaigns, in particular on the United Nations Human Rights Council, and its continued focus on the question of Palestine and the promotion of Africa. It was also important for DPI to strengthen its collaboration with DPKO and to continue to promote the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission.

35. DPI should allocate adequate resources to ensure the effective functioning of the information centres and should consider the views of the host countries when implementing proposals. While there had been progress in narrowing the gap among official languages, DPI should continue to strive for parity among the languages on the website. He welcomed new initiatives to drew attention to crucial issues often ignored by the media and stressed that DPI should also continue to use traditional media in disseminating the main messages of the United Nations, in particular in developing countries. He noted the proposals on strategic directions for United Nations libraries and stressed that the role of DPI should be further consolidated into the reform process.

36. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that DPI's role was to impartially and transparently provide people with accurate, comprehensive, timely and relevant information on the United Nations in order to strengthen international support for its activities. The Committee on Information had a vital role to play in that regard, and it should formulate a United Nations information policy that ensured harmony, goodwill and greater understanding.

37. DPI should continue its efforts to strengthen information dissemination to developing countries. In that connection, UNICs should be sufficiently funded in order to fully disseminate information to local populations. DPI should continue its efforts in areas of interest to developing countries, in particular in narrowing the digital divide between developed and developing countries.

38. Certain developed countries were taking advantage of their monopoly of modern communications technology in order to distort events in developing countries and damage their interests. Monopolized media was hampering efforts towards international peace and security and the United Nations, including DPI, should lead t..e international community in efforts to promote a new order of global information based on the free circulation of and more balance in its dissemination.

39. Freedom of expression was a human right that also implied a responsibility to respect the beliefs and rights of others. In that connection, sacrilege committed in the name of freedom of expression fostered resentment, hatred and hostility among peoples of different faiths. DPI should therefore continue its efforts to promote respect for and dialogue among all cultures, religions and civilizations.

40. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said his country attached great importance to the establishment of a new world information order which would be fairer and more in keeping with the principles of the

United Nations and with the aspirations and cultural values of people throughout the world.

41. The United Nations, and in particular DPI, was responsible for making the voice of the Organization heard, explaining its objectives and making its activities better known throughout the world in both the developing and the developed countries.

42. His delegation thanked DPI for its efforts to promote causes that were important to the international community. The subjects on which resolutions had been adopted, particularly those of the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies, figured largely in the information activities of the Organization. Matters of particular concern were foreign occupation, poverty, disease and the mobilization of the international community to address those evils.

43. Having carefully reviewed the report, his delegation thanked DPI for the enhancements made to the United Nations website, particularly those designed to afford access to blind and deaf persons. However, the Department needed to move quickly to achieve parity between the Organization's official languages. His delegation was concerned about the lack of equal use of the official languages on the United Nations website, particularly in relation to the Arabic pages. In that regard, he called for a more equitable allocation of human resources in order to achieve complete parity.

44. His delegation welcomed the outcomes of the Tunis phase of the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS) and emphasized the importance of implementing all of the commitments aimed at bridging the digital divide.

45. He thanked DPI for organizing the International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East that had been held in Moscow. In light of the continued Israeli occupation and the suffering of the Palestinian people, it was important for the Department to continue to organize such activities and to implement the special information programme on the question of Palestine.

46. DPI also had a valuable role to play in encouraging dialogue between civilizations and in establishing bridges of understanding between nations and peoples. In that regard, the Department's function was to prepare a suitable environment for such dialogue.

47. His delegation noted the increased cooperation of DPI with NGOs and the private sector. In light of that fact, he reminded the Department that its noble purpose was to make information about the United Nations as widely available as possible and that it should not be influenced by external media.

48. In conclusion, his delegation emphasized how important DPI was in publicizing the important role played by the Fourth Committee, especially in the area of the eradication of colonialism.

49. **Mr. Swareldahab** (Sudan) said his delegation appreciated the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information and for the insights therein on efforts to reform the Department of Public Information (DPI). The Department's decision to promote a culture of constant evaluation was to be commended.

50. DPI was an important element in the pivotal role the United Nations played in world affairs. It was the voice with which the Organization spoke to the world on important issues such as sustainable development, disarmament, dialogue among civilizations, women's rights and HIV/AIDS. It was important to strengthen the growing relationships between the Department and the media in developing countries, particularly with regard to promoting the aims of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Millennium Development Goals.

51. While commending DPI for the improvements made to the United Nations website, he said that it was clear that the North-South digital divide had widened and was preventing the site from being used to its fullest extent. Therefore, it was imperative to create a mechanism that would enable the largest number of citizens of developing countries to make best use of the Internet, and of the United Nations website in particular. In that regard, he emphasized that more attention should be paid to the use of Arabic on the website and that all languages should be treated equally and provided with the necessary resources.

52. DPI played an important role in disseminating information about issues that were of concern to certain peoples, such as the efforts of the United Nations to eradicate colonialism. More information needed to be disseminated about the question of Palestine inasmuch as it was the central issue that constantly threatened security and peace in the Middle East. United Nations information centres played a central role in highlighting that issue as well as others that were vital to peace and security.

53. During 2006, the world had witnessed an unprecedented and unjustified attack against the religious symbols of Muslims. The insulting depictions of the prophet Muhammad in cartoons that had appeared in a number of publications had had a negative impact on international stability. To avoid such incidents in the future, the United Nations, through DPI and in cooperation with influential media outlets, should disseminate messages that promoted dialogue among civilizations and respect for religious beliefs.

54. **Mr. Nepal** (Nepal) said that information and communications contributed to the enhancement of human culture and civilization. DPI had played a major role in disseminating information on a variety of issues including sustainable development and the rights of women and children, and it had increased its partnership with civil society and had made concerted efforts to highlight the importance of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, despite those efforts millions of people in the developing countries were out of reach of modern means of communication. DPI should strengthen its radio programming because radio and print media remained the most effective tools.

55. The United Nations information centres had become the main sources of information in the developing countries and it was important to provide more support to centres located in those countries. His Government recognized the importance of information and communications and had mainstreamed communications in the national development framework. His Government had prioritized the development of information and communications in the rural sectors. Furthermore, it was important to uphold the principle of freedom of expression. The national and international media had played a positive role during the peaceful people's movement for democracy in April 2006. His Government was concerned by the digital divide between the developed and developing countries and believed that developed countries should assist developing countries by transferring the appropriate technology to them. At the same time, there was an urgent need for the dissemination of information and training facilities in the developing countries, and DPI could play a more meaningful role in that regard.

56. **Mr. Sealy** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM member States supported the applications of the Dominican Republic and Thailand to become members of the Committee on Information. DPI played a crucial role in disseminating information on issues that impacted daily on the lives of people throughout the world. It was imperative that DPI should continue to build a constituency of support for the United Nations throughout the world and disseminate information on United Nations activities so that people had a clear understanding of the vital role played by the Organization.

57. From the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/216), it was clear that DPI had engaged in several thematic campaigns relating to the Human Rights Council, migration and development, the 2006 Small Arms Review Conference, regional issues in the Middle East, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Peacebuilding Commission and was continuing to cooperate with DPKO. It was particularly important to inform people about the difficult and dangerous role of United Nations peacekeepers.

58. The network of information centres made an important contribution to the work of DPI. His Government had taken note of the Secretary-General's proposals and had underwritten the rental cost of the information centre in the Port-of-Spain. The savings resulting from that decision should be applied to the relevant budget line so that the full allocation of financial resources for that centre was left intact. Staffing levels should also be increased by establishing the post of information officer in Kingston and recruiting an additional information officer in Barbados. In the interim period, it was hoped that the post of information officer at the Port-of-Spain centre would be filled by a suitably qualified and experienced national of Trinidad and Tobago. In order to illustrate the work of the United Nations in the Caribbean region the Port-of-Spain centre had established the practice of providing small groups of journalists with access to a prominent figure or expert. Furthermore, a series of six 90-second public service announcements for radio had been organized.

59. In the area of information and communication technology (ICT), steps were being taken to make the information centre web page more user-friendly. His Government was concerned by the digital divide and urged DPI to continue to raise awareness about the advantages of ICTs. The Port-of-Spain centre had also engaged in public outreach activities and had organized

programmes for secondary and tertiary education level students and officials based at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The establishment of the United Nations Communications Group-Trinidad and Tobago represented an important development that allowed for greater cohesiveness in the messages put forward by the various field offices in Port-of-Spain. However, his Government requested that financial resources continued to be made available for the United Nations Caribbean radio programme. Furthermore, the major media houses should be encouraged to be more receptive to the use of United Nations materials. Finally, his Government hoped that an appropriate level of coverage would be given to the observance in 2007 of the two hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

60. **Mr. Maboundou** (Congo) said that his Government welcomed the implementation of a culture of evaluation within DPI because it would ensure greater efficiency in the dissemination of information. Despite the fact that radio and television were the most effective communications tools, DPI should step up its efforts to assist the developing countries in the area of ICTs. Developing countries faced severe problems because of the digital divide. His Government welcomed the cooperation between DPI and DPKO and the improvements made to the United Nations website but urged DPI to continue its efforts to ensure that articles were translated into the official languages of the United Nations.

61. Finally, he expressed the hope that more resources could be provided to the information centres, which had a key role in improving the image of the United Nations, noting that any downscaling of the information centres should be carried out in close consultation with the host country and take into account the particular needs of each country and region. His Government noted with appreciation the role of DPI in promoting NEPAD objectives and focusing on the progress achieved in the region and on the remaining challenges.

62. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for Palestine) commended DPI for its dissemination of information on various United Nations activities and initiatives, and emphasized the importance of the Special information programme on Palestine which helped to increase the awareness of the international community with regard to the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. The Department should continue to help the Palestinian people with the development of their media and the training of their journalists. Recalling General Assembly resolution 60/38, which requested that DPI organize and promote fact-finding news missions for journalists to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, he condemned the refusal of the Israeli occupation authorities to adhere to the resolution and called on them to implement it immediately.

63. DPI should pay more attention to the dialogue of civilizations in order to ward off the dangers of hatred, fanaticism and racism. The insults to Islam and the Prophet Muhammad that had appeared in some Western media pointed to the need for greater efforts to promote dialogue among civilizations. Recalling General Assembly resolution 60/4 on the subject, he said that the Department had an important role to play in promoting and facilitating dialogue among civilizations in the various activities of the United Nations.

64. Finally, his delegation praised the development of the Department's radio and television programming and the expansion of its partnerships with international radio and television broadcasters.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.